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1846











POEMS

C245  
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OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.;

WITH

A NEW MEMOIR.

COMPILED FROM JOHNSON, SOUTHEY AND  
OTHER SOURCES.

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Philadelphia :  
URIAH HUNT & SON,  
44 North Fourth Street.

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1846.

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Bertram Smith  
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# MEMOIR

## OF

# WILLIAM COWPER.

WILLIAM COWPER was born on the 15th of November, (old style,) 1731, in the Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. His father, the Rector of the parish, was John Cowper, D. D., son of Spencer Cowper, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and next brother to the first earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor. His mother, the daughter of Roger Donne, Esq., of Norfolk, was of noble, and remotely of royal descent. It is not, however, for her genealogy, but for being the mother of a great poet, that this lady will be remembered. She died at the age of thirty-four, leaving of several children, only two sons. "I can truly say," said Cowper, nearly fifty years after her death, "that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day,) in which I do not think of her; such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short." At the time of her death, Cowper was but six years old; but young as he was, he felt his loss most poignantly, and has recorded his feelings on the occasion of her loss, in the most beautiful of his minor poems.

Soon after his mother's death, Cowper was sent to a boarding-school, where he suffered much from the cruelty of one of the elder boys. "Such was his savage treatment

of me," says he, "that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." His infancy is said to have been "delicate in no common degree," and his constitution appears early to have discovered a morbid tendency to despondency. When Cowper was ten years old, he was sent to Westminster School, where he remained eight years. At Westminster he obtained an excellent classical education, and was much beloved by his companions, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, Churchill, and Warren Hastings; but he complains much of his want of religious instruction at this school. "At the age of eighteen," he says, "being tolerably well furnished with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant of all kinds of religion as the satchel at my back, I was taken from Westminster."

He was now placed with an attorney, and had for his fellow clerk Thurlow, the after Lord Chancellor. He, however, made but little progress in the study of the law. "I did actually live," he writes his cousin Lady Hesketh, many years afterwards, "three years with a Solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton Row, as you well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night, in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law."

In 1752, at the age of twenty-one, Cowper took chambers in the Temple; and in a Memoir which he wrote some years afterwards, he thus describes the commencement of that malady which embittered so much of his future life. "Not long after my settlement in the Temple, I was struck with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same, can have any conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror and rising up in despair. . . . In this state of mind I

continued near a twelve-month ; when having experienced the inefficacy of all human means, I, at length, betook myself to God in prayer." Shortly after this, as he was walking in the country, "I felt," he continues, "the weight of all my misery taken off, and my heart became light and joyful in a moment. . . . But Satan, and my own wicked heart, soon persuaded me that I was indebted for my deliverance, to nothing but a change of scene, and on this hellish principle I burnt my prayers, and away went all my thoughts of devotion."

For ten years after being called to the bar, Cowper continued to reside in the Temple, amusing himself with literature and society, and making little or no effort to pursue his profession. He belonged to the "Nonsense Club," consisting of seven Westminster men, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, and Bonnell Thornton ; assisted the two latter in the "Connoisseur," and "though he wrote and published," says Hayley, "both verse and prose, it was as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors."

Meantime, he had fixed his affections on Theodora Jane, the daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper ; one of those ladies with whom he used to "giggle and make giggle," in Southampton Row. She is described as a lady of great personal and mental attractions ; and their affection was mutual. But her father objected to their union, both on the score of means and consanguinity. When it was found that his decision was final, the lovers never met again. It does not appear that this disappointment had any influence in inducing the return of his malady. In respect to love, as well as friendship and fame, few poets, and perhaps few men, have possessed feelings more sane and healthy, than Cowper. In after life, he said to Lady Hesketh, "I still look back to the memory of your sister and regret her ; but how strange it is ; if we were to meet now, we should not know each other." It was different with Theodora.

She lived unmarried, to extreme old age, and carefully preserved the poems which he had given her during their intercourse, to the end of her life.

+ At the age of thirty-one, the little patrimony, which had been left Cowper by his father, was well nigh spent. At this time, his uncle, who had the place at his disposal, offered him the clerkship of the Journals of the House of Lords. Cowper gladly accepted the offer, as the business being transacted in private, would be especially suited to his disposition, which was shy and reserved to a remarkable degree. But some political opposition arising, it was found necessary that he should prepare himself for an examination at the bar of the House. And now began a course of mental suffering, such as, perhaps, has never been described, except in his own fearful "Memoir." "I knew" says he, "to demonstration, that on these terms, the clerkship of the Journals was no place for me, to whom a public exhibition of myself on any occasion, was mortal poison." As the time for his examination approached, his distress of mind increased. He even hoped, and expected, that his intellect would fail him, in time to excuse his appearance at the bar. "But the day of decision drew near" he continues, "and I was still in my senses. At last came the grand temptation;—the point, to which Satan had all the time been driving me; the dark and hellish purpose of self-murder." In short, after several irresolute attempts at suicide, by poison and drowning, Cowper actually hanged himself to the door of his chamber; and only escaped death by the breaking of his garter, by which he was suspended. All thoughts of the office were now, of course, given up. His insanity remained, but its form was somewhat modified. He was no longer disposed to suicide, but "conviction of sin, and especially of that just committed," and despair of God's mercy, were now never absent from his thoughts. In every book that he opened he

found something which struck him to the heart. He almost believed that the "voice of his conscience was loud enough for any one to hear;" and he thought that "the people in the street stared and laughed" at him. When he attempted to repeat the creed, which he did, in experiment of his faith, he felt a sensation in his brain, "like a tremulous vibration of all its fibres," and thus lost the words; and he therefore concluded, in unspeakable agony, that he had committed the unpardonable sin. At length, he became a raving madman, and his friends now placed him at St. Albans, under the care of Dr. Cotton, a skilful and humane physician. Sometime previous to his removal to St. Albans, Cowper wrote the following Stanzas, descriptive of his state of mind :

Hatred and vengeance—my eternal portion  
Scarce can endure delay of execution—  
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my  
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas ; more abhorred than he was  
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master !  
Twice betrayed Jesus me, the last delinquent,  
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me.  
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter ;  
Therefore, Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all  
Bolted against me.

Hard lot ! encompassed with a thousand dangers ;  
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,  
I'm called in anguish to receive a sentence  
Worse than Abiram's.

"This," says Southey, "was the character of his madness—the most dreadful in which madness can present itself. He threw away the Bible, as a book in which he no longer had any interest or portion. A vein of self.

loathing and abhorrence ran through all his insanity, and he passed some months in continual expectation that the Divine vengeance would instantly plunge him into the bottomless pit. But horrors in madness are like those in dreams; the maniac and the dreamer seem to undergo what could not possibly be undergone by one awake or in his senses." With Dr. Cotton, Cowper remained five months, without amendment; but after discovering various symptoms of returning reason, during the next three "my despair," he says, "suddenly took wings, and left me in joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

When his recovery was considered complete, his relatives subscribed an annual allowance, just sufficient, with his own small means, to support him respectably in retirement, and sent him to reside at Huntingdon. Here he soon became greatly attached to the family of Mr. Unwin, a clergyman, in whose house he finally took up his abode. From this excellent family he never separated, until death dissolved their connexion. Mrs. Unwin, the "Mary" of one of his most popular minor poems, was his friend in health, and his nurse in sickness, for more than twenty years.

Of his way of life at Huntingdon, he thus writes: "As to what the world calls amusements, we have none. We refuse to take part in them, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. We breakfast between eight and nine : till eleven we read the Scriptures or the sermons of some faithful preacher, when we attend divine service, which is performed here, twice every day." Walking, gardening, reading, religious conversation, and singing hymns, filled up the interval till evening, when they again had a sermon or hymns, and closed the day with family worship. "I need not say," he continues, "that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly we are all happy." At this time Cowper had

little communication with his relatives, and none with his former companions.

In July 1767, Mr. Unwin died; his children had previously settled in life; and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin uniting their means of living, now much reduced, went to reside at Olney. Here they lived many years under the pastoral care of the celebrated Mr. Newton, with whom they were in the strictest habits of personal intimacy.

"Mr. Newton," says Southey, "was a man, whom it was impossible not to admire for his strength and sincerity of heart, vigorous intellect, and sterling worth. A sincerer friend Cowper could not have found: he might have found a more discreet one." Cowper's religious duties and exercises were now much more arduous than at Huntingdon. This "man of trembling sensibilities" attended the sick, and administered consolation to the dying; and so constantly was he employed in offices of this kind, that he was considered as a sort of curate to Mr. Newton. In the prayer-meetings which Mr. Newton established, Cowper, to whom "public exhibition of himself was mortal poison," was expected to take a part. "I have heard him say," says Mr. Greatheed, in Cowper's funeral sermon, "that when he was expected to take the lead in your social worship, his mind was always greatly agitated for some hours preceding."

Cowper's correspondence with his friends was now even more restricted than heretofore. This was partly owing to his engagements with Mr. Newton, from whom he was seldom "seven waking hours apart;" but it was the tendency of those engagements to restrict his sympathies, and render his friendships torpid. "A letter on any other subject than that of religion," he writes at this time, "is more insipid to me, than even my task was when a school-boy." He read little, and had little society except that of Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin; and the only really intellectual

occupation, in which he was engaged for nearly seven years, was the composition of some of the "Olney Hymns." This, Hayley represents as a "perilous employment" for a mind like Cowper's; "and if," says Southey, 'Cowper expressed his own state of mind in these hymns, (and that he did so, who can doubt) Hayley has drawn the right conclusion from the fact.'

His malady was now about to return. Its recurrence has been referred to various causes;—the death of his brother, and a supposed engagement of marriage with Mrs. Unwin, have both been adduced, as the probable occasions; the latter of which, Southey considers as utterly unfounded.

Cowper's mind was, doubtless, at all times, highly susceptible of derangement from several causes. The disease, which was inherent to his constitution, only required some untoward circumstance to develop it. And the chief disturbing influence at this time, appears to have been religious excitement. His tender, willing, and easily-troubled spirit, had so often thrilled with the exstasies of devotion; and had so often been agitated and repulsed by those of its duties, which were uncongenial, and to him, even revolting, that it at last became epileptic. He sometimes speaks of his heart as if it was paralyzed; and the moaning burden of his later hymns is that he "cannot feel." According to Mr. Newton's own account of himself, "his name was up through the country, for preaching people mad;" it would therefore seem to follow, that he should have been the last person in the world, to take spiritual charge of one, who had once been a madman. But from whatever cause, in January, 1773, Cowper's case had become one of decided insanity. Medical advice was not sought until eight months after this time; as Mr. Newton, believing his disease to be entirely the work of the Enemy, expected his cure only by the special interposition of Providence. "From what

I told Dr. Cotton," Mr. Newton writes in August, "he seemed to think it a difficult case. It may be so according to medical rules; but I still hope the Great Physician will cure him either by giving a blessing to means, or immediately by His own hand." But Cowper still continued to grow worse, and in the following October, he attempted suicide. A remarkable characteristic of his delirium, at this time, and one which shows how strongly, even in insanity, Cowper was influenced by conscience, was his perfect submission to what he believed to be the will of God. "And he believed," says Mr. Newton, "that it was the will of God, he should, after the example of Abraham, perform an expensive act of obedience, and offer not a son, but himself." He again believed, as heretofore, that, by a sort of special act, he had been excluded from salvation, and all the gifts of the spirit; and with "deplorable consistency," says Mr. Greatheed, "abstained not only from public and domestic worship, but also from private prayer."

In this state of hopeless misery he remained till the ensuing May, when he began to manifest symptoms of amendment. "Yesterday," writes Mr. Newton, May 14th, "as he was feeding chickens,—for he is always busy if he can get out of doors,—some little incident made him smile. I am pretty sure it was the first smile that has been seen upon his face for more than sixteen months." Soon after this he began to pay some attention to gardening: and in gardening, and other light occupations, he continued to employ himself nearly two years, gradually improving in health and spirits, but incapable of being entertained either by books or company. It was at this interval that Cowper amused himself with the far-famed hares, Tiney, Puss and Bess, which he has immortalized, both in verse and prose.

But in the autumn of 1777, though his fatal delusion re-

specting his spiritual welfare continued, his intellect and social feelings awoke to activity. He now renewed his correspondence with some of his old friends, his love of reading revived, and he occasionally produced a small poem. Mrs. Unwin, observing the happy effect of composition on his health and spirits, now excited him to more decided literary exertion; and, at her suggestion, he commenced his Moral Satires. So eagerly did he pursue his new employment, that the first of these poems was written in December, 1780, and the last in the following March.

These productions met with the approbation of his friends, and by them,—for Cowper was almost indifferent on the subject,—it was finally determined to publish them.

Mr. Newton had the year previous, much to Cowper's regret, removed to London. But the loss of his society, was for a time, more than made up by a new acquaintance. This was Lady Austen, a highly intelligent and agreeable woman, the widow of a baronet, who, while Cowper was preparing his volume for the press, visited Olney; and the acquaintance which was then formed, soon ripened into such warm friendship, between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, and herself, that she ultimately, in consequence, came to Olney to reside. Their kindly intercourse, however, after continuing about two years, was unhappily broken off; and love and jealousy have been mentioned as among the causes of their estrangement. That there may have been jealousy of attention and of influence between "two women constantly in the society of one man," and that man, Cowper, all, who know the female heart, will readily believe. But it does not appear, as has been asserted, that there was any expectation of marriage entertained by either of the parties. Cowper, and Mrs. Unwin, who was considerably older than himself, had now lived together some years on joint income; and no pecuniary objection existed to their union.

But the only union, that either desired, had long since been formed. It was a union purely of the nobler sympathies—of religious and social feelings—of self-sacrificing devotedness, and of consequent grateful affection;—such as must, almost of necessity, arise between a man and a woman, possessed of the highest moral qualities, and relatively situated, as they were to each other, but which the vulgar and censorious (great and small) cannot or will not understand. As to Lady Austen, Cowper's own account of the matter is, that she had too much vivacity for their staid course of life, that the attentions she exacted interfered with his studies, and that she was too easily offended; hence a coldness ensued, and finally a separation. But while the intimacy continued, Lady Austen undoubtedly exercised a highly valuable influence on Cowper's literary efforts. "Had it not been for Mrs. Unwin," says Southey, "Cowper would probably never have appeared in his own person as an author; had it not been for Lady Austen, he would never have been a popular one." His first volume of Poems, which was published in 1782, obtained but little notice, except among his friends; but to please his friends was sufficient for Cowper, and he continued to write, notwithstanding the disregard of the public. Lady Austen, whose conversation, for a time, is said to have had "as happy an effect on his spirits as the harp of David upon Saul," one afternoon, when he was unusually depressed, told him the story of John Gilpin, which she had heard in her childhood. The story amused him greatly, and before the next morning, he had turned it into a ballad. This soon found its way into the newspapers, and sometime afterwards, it was recited, with wonderful effect, by Henderson, the actor, who was then delivering public recitations at Freemason's Hall. The ballad now became suddenly popular, and Gilpin was to be seen in every print-shop, while the author was unknown. Meantime the

Task, suggested also by Lady Austen, and far the best and most popular of his longer poems, had been completed; it was published in 1785, and with it, was printed John Gilpin. Cowper was therefore known to be its author; and those who had been amused with the ballad, now read the Task, and inquired for his previous volume, and Cowper became, at once, the most popular poet of the day.

In November, 1784, immediately after the completion of the Task, Cowper began the translation of Homer. He had now found by experience that regular employment was essential to his well-being;—employment too, of a really intellectual nature, such as would call into activity, without too much exciting, the best powers of his mind. “A long and perplexing thought,” he said, “buzzed about in his brain, till it seemed to be breaking all the fibres of it.” “Plaything-avocations” wearied him; while such as engaged him much, and attached him closely, were rather serviceable than otherwise.

The unfaithfulness of Pope’s translation of Homer had long been universally acknowledged by scholars, and Cowper, who was well qualified for the task, after translating one book, as he says, for want of employment, “became convinced that he could render an acceptable service to the literary world by translating the whole.” The undertaking thus commenced, he availed himself of the Gentleman’s Magazine to produce on the public, an impression favorable to his design, and issued proposals to publish by subscription. His Poems had been given away, and when published, he had been careless of popular favor in respect to them. But fame, coming, as it did, unexpectedly, was not the less welcome to him; and he was now, not only anxious to sustain it, by the success of his present undertaking, but also to secure a profitable result to himself. “Five hundred names,” he writes, “at three guineas, will put about a thousand pounds in my purse; and I

am doing my best to obtain them." And again, to Lady Hesketh, "I am not ashamed to confess that having commenced author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature, an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities, it has been owing, that till lately, I stole through life without undertaking anything, yet always wishing to distinguish myself."

During this and the following year, Cowper advanced steadily with his translation, receiving much attention and encouragement from his friends. Through the kindness of Lady Hesketh, and his neighbor, Sir John Throckmorton, he and Mrs. Unwin were enabled to remove to the Lodge, at Weston-Underwood, about a mile from Olney, which was far more commodious and healthful, than their habitation at Olney.

Lady Hesketh's occasional visits, at this time, were also a source of much enjoyment to him, and his grateful and affectionate heart was strongly moved and interested by the singular kindness manifested for him by an anonymous correspondent. "Hours and hours and hours," he writes Lady Hesketh, in reference to this subject, "have I spent in endeavors, altogether fruitless, to trace the writer of the letter that I send, by a minute examination of the character, and never did it strike me, till this moment, that your father wrote it." This suspicion, Lady Hesketh, who was apparently in the secret, did not confirm. The letter in question was, evidently, from some one minutely acquainted with the circumstances of Cowper's early life; and after many expressions of kindness and encouragement, the writer concludes by presenting him with an annuity of fifty pounds. After receiving another letter from the same source, Cowper writes,

"Anonymous is come again. May God bless him, whoever he may be;" and he adds, in a postscript, "I kept my letter unsealed to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the expected parcel. It is, at all points, worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff-box, purse, notes—Bess, Puss, Tiney—all safe. Again may God bless him!" On the snuff-box, was a view of the "Peasant's Nest," as described in the Task, with the figures of three hares in the foreground. And for these "womanly presents," as Southey calls them, he appoints Lady Hesketh his "receiver general of thanks;" as "it is very pleasant, my dear cousin," he says, "to receive presents, so delicately conveyed, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for them." "Alas, the love of woman!" Southey conjectures that Anonymous was no other than Theodora, the object of Cowper's early love, whom he had not seen for five-and-twenty years.

In one of those sincere, affectionate, and inimitably graceful letters, written, about this time, to his favorite cousin, Lady Hesketh, which have secured to Cowper the title of "the best of English letter-writers," he gives the following retrospect of his state of mind:—

"You do not ask me, my dear, for an explanation of what I could mean by *anguish of mind*. Because you *do not* ask, and because your reason for not asking consists of a delicacy and tenderness peculiar to yourself; for that very cause I will tell you. A wish suppressed is more irresistible than many wishes plainly uttered. Know then, that in the year 1773, the same scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon me again at Olney, only covered by a still deeper shade of melancholy; and ordained to be of much longer duration. I was suddenly reduced from my wonted rate of understanding, to an almost childish imbecility. I did not, indeed, lose my senses, but I lost the power to exercise them. I could return a rational answer,

even to a difficult question; but a question was necessary, or I never spoke. I believed that every body hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me worst of all,—was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. I would not be more circumstantial than is necessary. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He recommended particular vigilance lest I should attempt my life,—a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had. She performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion; and I have often heard her say, that if she ever praised God in her life, it was when she found that she was to have all the labor. Methinks I hear you ask,—your affection for me, will, I know, make you wish to do so,—“Is your malady removed?” I reply, in a great measure, but not quite. Occasionally I am much distressed, but that distress becomes continually less frequent, and, I think, less violent. I find writing, and especially poetry my best remedy. Perhaps had I understood music, I had never written verse, but had lived on fiddle-strings instead. . . . I have been emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became capable of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, boxes and stools. I grew weary of this in about a twelvemonth, and addressed myself to the making of bird-cages. To this employment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled with that of drawing; but finding that the latter occupation injured my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have given you, my dear, a little history in short hand. I know it will touch your feelings; but do not let it interest them too much.”

According to Cowper's narrative of his first attack, he

believed that his disease was entirely the work of the Enemy, and that his recovery was supernatural. Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin were of the same opinion, and many months elapsed, as we have seen, after the commencement of the second attack,—much the most violent and protracted,—before they could bring themselves to seek earthly remedies. But Mr. Newton was now away, and Mrs. Unwin, says Southey, “was governed by her natural good sense;” and the rational view of his condition which Cowper took at the time of writing this letter, was such as to induce the reasonable hope of his perfect restoration. Of the religious impulses by which he had been actuated, while at Olney, he thus speaks: “Good is intended, but harm is done too often, by the zeal with which I was at that time animated.”

But despair of salvation never wholly left him after his second attack; and this feeling discovers itself, more or less strongly, in all his letters to Mr. Newton.

From a sincere, but mistaken zeal for Cowper’s spiritual welfare, Mr. Newton seems to have interfered at this time, rather unwarrantably in his domestic affairs. He objected to their removal to Weston; and because Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had occasionally visited the Throckmortons and other neighbouring gentry, accused them of deviating into forbidden paths, and seeking worldly amusement and society. In reply to one of his letters of censure, Cowper says: “You say well that there was a time when I was happy at Olney, and I am as happy now as I expect to be anywhere without the presence of God.” And again: “Be assured, that notwithstanding all rumors to the contrary, we are exactly what we were when you saw us last;—I miserable on account of God’s departure from me, which I believe to be final; and she seeking his return to me in the path of duty, and by continual prayer.” This was his constant and abiding impression;—and so constant was

it, that in time, it lost something of its gloomy effect on his spirits. Scott, in his *Demonology*, narrates the case of a man, who was so constantly attended by a frightful spectral illusion, that from the effect of custom, he came at last to speak of it quietly, and was, at times, almost unconscious of its presence. Cowper's case was, in some respects, similar to this. He sometimes adverts to his despair as a matter of course, and without much emotion. "I would," he writes Mr. Newton, "that I could see some of the mountains that you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet, who has never seen a mountain. But mountains I shall never see, unless it be in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven; nor then, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man."

His disease had now been dormant for some years; but in January 1787, (a month which he always dreaded,) it again became active. He now once more attempted suicide, and would have effected it, but for Mrs. Unwin, who finding him suspended by the neck, possessed presence of mind enough to cut him down. His malady was quite as severe as on former occasions, but of much shorter duration. There is no other account of it than the little which his own letters furnish, after his recovery. "My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. The sight of any face, except Mrs. Unwin's, was an insupportable grievance. From this dreadful condition I emerged suddenly." In about seven months, he appears to have renewed his intercourse with his neighbours, and resumed his correspondence. Writing to Lady Hesketh of his renewed health, he says, "I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but *expect, when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future." And again, to the same: "I continue to write, though in compassion to my pate, you advised me, for the

present, to abstain. In reality, I have no need, at least I believe not, of any such caution. Those jarrings which made my skull feel like a broken egg-shell, and those twirls which I spoke of, have been removed by an infusion of bark." In another letter, he thus playfully speaks of his diseased sensations: "I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright; neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub, accept my best love. Yours,  
W. C."

But in the letter with which he renewed his correspondence with Mr. Newton, he still speaks of gloom and despair, and of "the storms of which even the remembrance, makes hope impossible." The same letter also exhibits a peculiar and distinct feature in this most remarkable case of insanity. "My dear friend," he begins, "after a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect at least, better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief in your identity, which for thirteen years I did not believe."

Cowper now resumed his translation, which he pursued during the next four years, with little interruption. In the circumstances of his life at this time, there was much to cheer him. His abode was comfortable, his employment satisfactory, his reputation established and increasing, he had renewed his correspondence with his relatives, and some of the companions of his early life, by whom he was occasionally visited; and Lady Hesketh's annual visits, and the society of the Throckmortons, which, notwithstanding Mr. Newton's censure, he and Mrs. Unwin still continued to enjoy, afforded him the relaxation of happy social intercourse. An incident, too, which with its attendant circumstances, added much to Cowper's happiness during the latter portion of this interval, was the receipt of his mother's picture. "It was his lot," to

quote Southey's Narrative, "happy indeed in this respect, to form new friendships as he advanced in years, instead of having to mourn for the dissolution of old ones by death. During seven-and-twenty years he had held no intercourse with his maternal relations, and knew not whether they were living or dead; the malady which made him withdraw from the world seems, in its milder consequences, to have withheld him from making any inquiry concerning them; and from their knowledge he had entirely disappeared till he became known to the public. One of a younger generation was the first to seek him out. This was Mr. John Johnson, grandson of his mother's brother. . . . During his visit he observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother; the only portrait of her was in possession of her niece, Mrs. Bodham, who had been a favourite cousin of Cowper's in her childhood; and upon young Johnson's report of his visit, on his return home, this picture was sent to Weston as a present, with a letter from his kinswoman, written in the fulness of her heart. It was replied to with kindred feeling, thus:"—

"My dear Rose, whom I thought withered and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to

my embraces. I kissed it and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought in the days of my childhood much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability; and a little, I would hope, both of his and her,—I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention,—but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature*. Add to this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Pauls's, and I think I have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all. I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am

My dear, dear Rose, ever yours,

W. C."

About this time, the laureateship became vacant by the death of Warton; Cowper was always ready at occasional verses; and his friends were desirous to procure the office for him; but he declined their services in this matter, in the following letter to Lady Hesketh.—

*The Lodge, May 28th, 1790.*

MY DEAREST COZ,

I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion. But Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I would never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, would least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer-hurry.

W. C.

In the summer of 1791, his *Homer* was published; and though it does not now hold that rank among the translated classics, which he and his friends expected it would establish for itself, it was, at the time, well received, its merits as a faithful version were allowed; and on settling with his bookseller, Cowper expressed himself satisfied with the pecuniary result of his labor. "Few of my concerns," said he, "have been so happily concluded."

In the following August, (1792,) Cowper made a three-days' journey into Sussex, to visit, at Eartham, his friend Haley, the poet, who had sought and made his acquaintance the previous year. He was so unaccustomed to travel that the journey was undertaken only at the earnest entreaty of his friend, and not without many misgivings. "I laugh," he writes Haley, a few days before he set out, "to think what stuff these solitudes are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel, while other men steal from their homes, and make no disturbance." Again:—"Fortunately for my intentions, as the day approaches, my terrors abate, for had they continued what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you." At Eartham Cowper met Hurdis, Charlotte

Smith, the novelist, and Romney; to the latter of whom he sat for his portrait. During the first part of the six weeks, which he spent with Haley and his friends, their society had a beneficial effect on his spirits; but at last, he began to be somewhat dejected, and evidently longed for the repose and seclusion of Weston. New scenes and strange objects, he complained, dissipated his powers of thinking, and composition, and even letter-writing became irksome to him. "I am, in truth," he writes, "so unaccountably local in the use of the pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could only leap well at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. It has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine is peculiarly gratified." On his way home, he passed but a single night,—and that a gloomy one,—in London, which he had not visited since he left it, a madman, in 1763. This was the only long journey that Cowper ever made. The year previous he wrote Hurdis, "I have not been thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far but seldom."

The translation of Homer, which occupied him nearly six years, was the last literary undertaking of importance which Cowper lived to finish. At the suggestion of a friend, he commenced a poem on the Four Ages, of which, he at first, had high hopes, but he was unable to make much progress in it. Previously to his engagement with Homer, he had commenced an original work with a similar result. His Task and other poems had been written with ease and rapidity; but "the mind," he remarked, in reference to this subject, "is not a fountain, but a cistern." The facts, observations, and impressions, which had been accumulating in his mind, during the somewhat long period of his life, before he commenced author, had gradually become, as it were, crystalized into thoughts and images of beautiful clearness and precision; and to polish these and arrange

them into verse, was a healthful and amusing occupation rather than an irksome labor. But his resources for original composition appear to have been mainly exhausted when he had finished the Task. For a man of literature, his reading was limited; he had seen but little; and though he saw clearly and felt strongly, what he saw and felt at all, and transferred his impressions with admirable distinctness to the minds of others, yet his sympathies were not extensive; and where he was not attracted, he was too often repulsed. At the request of friends, he wrote a few ballads on Slavery, and he was repeatedly urged to make this the subject of an extended poem; but he rejected the theme as "odious and disgusting;" one which he could not bear to contemplate. Poet of nature as he was, his enjoyment, even, of natural scenery was limited; and he complained, on his visit to Haley, that the wildness of the hills and woods around Eartham oppressed his spirits. "Cowper," says Sir James Mackintosh, "does not describe the most beautiful scenes in nature; he discovers what is most beautiful in ordinary scenes. His poetical eye and his moral heart detected beauty in the sandy flats of Buckinghamshire."

Another design, which he undertook, at the request of Johnson, his bookseller, and which was also left unfinished, was a new edition of Milton, which was intended to rival in splendor, Boydell's Shakspeare. But Cowper was now beginning to feel the effects of age as well as of disease. Not only this, but his old and dear friend, and faithful and affectionate nurse, Mrs. Unwin, "who had known no wish but his for the last twenty years," had now fallen into a state of hopeless imbecility. "Their relative situation to each other," says Southey, "was now reversed. She was the helpless person, and he the attentive nurse. As her reasoning faculties decayed, her character underwent a total change, and she exacted constant atten-

tion from him without the slightest consideration for his health or state of mind. Poor creatures that we are, even the strength of religious principle and virtuous habit, fail us, if reason fails."

This circumstance sensibly affected his spirits; and though no sudden and striking change henceforth took place in his demeanor, it now became evident that reason was gradually losing its influence over his mind. This was especially shewn by a correspondence which he commenced, about this time, with one Teedon, a poor, conceited schoolmaster, of Olney. Cowper had long been troubled, not only with hideous dreams, but with audible illusions. During the night, and on waking in the morning, he frequently heard, as he said, some sentence uttered in a distinct voice, to which he gave implicit credit, as having some relation either to his temporal or spiritual concerns. He had long known Teedon, and understood his character; and in former days, had sometimes been amused with his vanity and conceit. But he had now, by some means, become persuaded that this man was especially favored by Providence; and to him, the sentences which he heard, with an account of his dreams and other nocturnal experiences, were regularly sent off; and the result of these "pitiable consultations," Cowper carefully wrote in a book till he had filled several volumes. The following will serve as specimens of these letters. "Dear Sir—I awoke this morning, with these words relating to my work [Milton] loudly and distinctly spoken—'*Apply assistance in my case indigent and necessitous.*'" Again: "This morning, at my waking, I heard these—'*Fulfil thy promise to me.*'" On another occasion, he writes Teedon as follows.—"I have been visited with a horrible dream, in which I seemed to be taking a final leave of my dwelling. I felt the tenderest regret at the separation, and looked about for something durable to carry with me as a

memorial. The iron hasp of the garden-door presenting itself, I was on the point of taking that, but recollecting that the heat of the fire, in which I was going to be tormented, would fuse the metal, and that it would only serve to increase my insupportable misery, I left it. I then awoke in all the horror with which the reality of such circumstances would fill me." Thus, "hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season," and by day, "forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils." the gloom of despair was now settling down on Cowper for the last time. His temporal wants were, however, now amply provided for; a pension of three hundred pounds having been granted him by government.

In the summer of 1795, his friends thought it advisable that he and Mrs. Unwin, (for it would have been cruel to separate them,) should visit the coast for the benefit of the sea air. After a short sojourn at Mundsley, productive of little advantage, they finally went to reside at East Dereham, in Norfolk, at the house of Cowper's cousin, the Rev. John Johnson, the relative mentioned in a former part of this narrative, who procured for him the portrait of his mother. Here Cowper remained to the end of his life, and here Mrs. Unwin died some time before him. When his health and spirits would permit, Cowper occupied himself at Dereham with the revisal of his *Homer*, and he sometimes wrote a few verses. The last original piece that he composed was the *Castaway*; and in the words of Southey, "all circumstances considered, it is one of the most affecting that ever was composed." At length, however, he refused either to read or write, and his only employment afterwards, was in listening to works of fiction—almost the only books that appeared to interest him: and "so happy," says Mr. Johnson, "was the influence of these in riveting his attention, that he discovered peculiar satisfaction when any one of more than ordinary length

was introduced." This being perceived by his kinsman, the novels of Richardson were obtained, and they afforded him the more pleasure on account of his former personal acquaintance with the author. "Perhaps too," Southey adds, "there may be more satisfaction in re-perusing a good book after an interval of many years, than is felt in reading it for the first time." These readings did not, however wholly abstract Cowper's mind from the contemplation of his own wretched state. In one of the few most melancholy letters which he wrote during these years to Lady Hesketh, he says, "I expect that in six days, at the latest, I shall no longer foresee, but feel the accomplishment of all my fears. O, lot of unexampled misery incurred in a moment! O wretch! to whom death and life are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable I have my senses continued to me, only that I may look forward to the worst. It is certain, at least, that I have them for no other purpose, and but very imperfectly for this. My thoughts are like loose and dry sand, which, the closer it is grasped, slips the sooner away. Mr. Johnson reads to me, but I lose every other sentence through the inevitable wanderings of my mind, and experience, as I have these two years, the same shattered mode of thinking on every subject, and on all occasions. If I seem to write with more connexion, it is only because the gaps do not appear.

"Adieu.—I shall not be here to receive your answer, neither shall I ever see you more. Such is the expectation of the most desperate, and the most miserable of all beings.

W. C."

The last reading which Cowper heard was that of his own Poems. He listened in silence to Mr. Johnson, till they came to John Gilpin, but this he begged his kinsman to omit. In February, 1800, he was taken with dropsy, which in a short time confined him to his chamber. The

physician who was called to attend him, asking him "how he felt?" "Feel!" said Cowper, "I feel unutterable despair!" To the consolations of religion he refused to listen; and when, on one occasion, Mr. Johnson spoke to him of a "merciful Redeemer, who had prepared unspeakable happiness for all his children,—and therefore for him," Cowper, with passionate entreaties, begged him to desist from any further observations of a similar kind. A few days after this sad scene, the attendant offering him a cordial, he rejected it, saying, "What can it signify;" and these were the last words he was heard to utter. He died on the following morning, the 25th of April, 1800.

No one, it would seem, can read Southey's Biography of this blameless and suffering man of genius, without strong feelings of regret that he did not, earlier in life, resort to literature as a serious employment. Full and congenial occupation was absolutely indispensable, not merely, as in ordinary cases, to his enjoyment of life, but to his exemption from the most cruel disease; and to any other pursuits than those of literature, his wretched nervous system rendered him utterly incompetent. What Göethe says of Hamlet, may, with some modification, apply to Cowper. Any of the common avocations, and any of the onerous and vexatious duties of life, were to him as "an oak tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered." It is scarcely probable that any combination of circumstances could have availed, wholly to avert the malady which poisoned his existence. His whole system, both of mind and body was so peculiar in its organization,—so admirable in some of its parts, and so feeble and defective in others,—that too much, or too little, or any uncongenial action was sure to disturb or destroy its balance. But literature, though tried late, proved to be infinitely the best remedy to soothe and regu-

late this diseased action ; and had Cowper found at Huntingdon, the employment and the society, which he at last, after the departure of Mr. Newton, found at Olney and Weston, he might, perchance, have escaped many years of woe.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK I.

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### THE SOFA.

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#### ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST BOOK.

Historical deduction of seats, from the Stool to the Sofa—  
A Schoolboy's ramble—A walk in the country—The  
scene described—Rural sounds as well as sights delightful—Another walk—Mistake concerning the charms  
of solitude corrected—Colonnades commended—Alcove,  
and the view from it—The wilderness—The grove—  
The thresher—The necessity and benefit of exercise—  
The works of nature superior to, and in some instances  
inimitable by, art—The wearisomeness of what is com-  
monly called a life of pleasure—Change of scene some-  
times expedient—A common described, and the charac-  
ter of crazy Kate introduced—Gipsies—The blessings  
of civilized life—That state most favourable to virtue—  
The South Sea Islanders compassionate, but chiefly  
Omai—His present state of mind supposed—Civilized  
life friendly to virtue, but not great cities—Great cities,  
and London in particular, allowed their due praise, but  
censured—Fête champêtre—The book concludes with-  
a reflection on the fatal effects of dissipation and effemi-  
nacy upon our public measures.

I SING the *Sofa*. I, who lately sang  
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touch'd with awe  
The solemn chords, and, with a trembling hand,  
Escap'd with pain from that advent'rous flight,  
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme ;  
The theme, though humble, yet august and  
proud

Th' occasion—for the fair commands the song.

Time was, when clothing, sumptuous or for use,  
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.  
As yet black breeches were not ; satin smooth,  
Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile :  
The hardy chief, upon the rugged rock  
Wash'd by the sea, or on the gravelly bank  
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,  
Fearless of wrong, repos'd his weary strength.  
Those barb'rous ages past, succeeded next  
The birthday of Invention ; weak at first,  
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.  
Joint-stools were then created ; on three legs  
Upborne they stood. Three legs upholding firm  
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.  
On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,  
And sway'd the sceptre of his infant realms :  
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear  
May still be seen ; but perforated sore,  
And drill'd in holes, the solid oak is found,  
By worms voracious eating through and through.

At length a generation more refin'd  
Improv'd the simple plan ; made three legs four,

Gave them a twisted form vermicular,  
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding  
stuff'd,

Induc'd a splendid cover, green and blue,  
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought  
And woven close, of needlework sublime.  
There might ye see the piony spread wide,  
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,  
Lapdog and lambkin with black staring eyes,  
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.

Now came the cane from India, smooth and  
bright,

With nature's varnish; sever'd into stripes,  
That interlac'd each other, these supplied  
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that brac'd  
The new machine, and it became a chair.  
But restless was the chair; the back erect  
Distress'd the weary loins, that felt no ease;  
The slipp'ry seat betrayed the sliding part  
That press'd it, and the feet hung dangling  
down,

Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.  
These for the rich; the rest, whom fate had  
plac'd

In modest mediocrity, content  
With base materials, sat on well-tann'd hides,  
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,  
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,  
Or scarlet crewel, in the cushion fix'd,  
If cushion might be call'd, what harder seem'd  
Than the firm oak, of which the frame was  
form'd.

No want of timber then was felt or fear'd  
In Albion's happy isle. The lumber stood  
Pond'rous and fix'd by its own massy weight.  
But elbows still were wanting; these, some say,  
An alderman of Cripplegate contrived;  
And some ascribe th' invention to a priest  
Burly, and big, and studious of his ease.  
But rude at first, and not with easy slope  
Receding wide, they press'd against the ribs,  
And bruis'd the side; and, elevated high,  
Taught the rais'd shoulders to invade the ears.  
Long time elaps'd or e'er our rugged sires  
Complain'd, though incommodiously pent in,  
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first  
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.  
Ingenious Fancy, never better pleas'd  
Than when employ'd t' accommodate the fair,  
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devis'd  
The soft settee; one elbow at each end,  
And in the midst an elbow it receiv'd,  
United, yet divided, twain at once.  
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne;  
And so two citizens, who take the air,  
Close pack'd, and smiling, in a chaise and one.  
But relaxation of the languid frame,  
By soft recumbency of outstretch'd limbs,  
Was bliss reserv'd for happier days. So slow  
The growth of what is excellent; so hard  
T' attain perfection in this nether world.  
Thus first Necessity invented stools,  
Convenience next suggested elbow-chairs,  
And Luxury th' accomplish'd *Sofa* last.

The nurse sleeps sweetly, hir'd to watch the  
sick

Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he,  
Who quits the coach-box at a midnight hour,  
To sleep within the carriage more secure,  
His legs depending at the open door.  
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,  
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head;  
And sweet the clerk below. But neither sleep  
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead;  
Nor his, who quits the box at midnight hour  
To slumber in the carriage more secure;  
Nor sleep enjoy'd by curate in his desk;  
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk, are sweet,  
Compar'd with the repose the *Sofa* yields.

O may I live exempted (while I live  
Guiltless of pamper'd appetite obscene)  
From pangs arthritic, that infest the toe  
Of libertine Excess. The *Sofa* suits  
The gouty limb, 't is true: but gouty limb,  
Though on a *Sofa*, may I never feel:  
For I have lov'd the rural walk through lanes  
Of grassy swarth, close cropp'd by nibbling  
sheep,  
And skirted thick with intertexture firm  
Of thorny boughs; have lov'd the rural walk  
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink,  
E'er since a truant boy I pass'd my bounds  
T' enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames;  
And still remember, not without regret,  
Of hours, that sorrow since has much endear'd,  
How oft, my slice of pocket store consum'd,

Still hung'ring, pennyless, and far from home,  
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,  
Or blushing crabs, or berries, that emboss  
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.  
Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite  
Disdains not ; nor the palate, undeprav'd  
By culinary arts, unsav'ry deems.  
No *Sofa* then awaited my return ;  
Nor *Sofa* then I needed. Youth repairs  
His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil  
Incurring short fatigue ; and, though our years,  
As life declines, speed rapidly away,  
And not a year but pilfers as he goes  
Some youthful grace, that age would gladly  
keep ;  
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees  
Their length and colour from the locks they  
spare ;  
The elastic spring of an unwearied foot,  
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the  
fence ;  
That play of lungs, inhaling and again  
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes  
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,  
Mine have not pilfer'd yet ; nor yet impair'd  
My relish of fair prospect ; scenes that sooth'd  
Or charm'd me young, no longer young, I find  
Still soothing, and of pow'r to charm me still.  
And witness, dear companion of my walks,  
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive  
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,  
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth

And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—  
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.  
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,  
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up  
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,  
But genuine, and art partner of them all.  
How oft upon yon eminence our pace  
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne  
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,  
While Admiration, feeding at the eye,  
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene ;  
Thence, with what pleasure have we just discern'd  
The distant plough slow moving, and beside  
His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,  
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy !  
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain  
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,  
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course  
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,  
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,  
That screen the herdsmen's solitary hut ;  
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,  
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,  
The sloping land recedes into the clouds ;  
Displaying on its varied side the grace  
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,  
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells  
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,  
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.  
Scenes must be beautiful, which daily view'd

Please daily, and whose novelty survives  
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.  
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,  
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore  
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,  
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood  
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike  
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,  
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;  
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,  
And all their leaves fast flutt'ring, all at once.  
Nor less composure waits upon the roar  
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice  
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that slip  
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall  
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length  
In matted grass, that with a livelier green  
Betrays the secret of their silent course.  
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds  
But animated nature sweeter still,  
To sooth and satisfy the human ear.  
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one  
The livelong night; nor these alone, whose notes  
Nice-finger'd Art must emulate in vain,  
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime  
In still-repeated circles, screaming loud,  
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl,  
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me,  
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,  
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,  
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought  
Devis'd the weatherhouse, that useful toy!  
Fearless of humid air and gath'ring rains,  
Forth steps the man—an emblem of myself;  
More delicate his tim'rous mate retires.  
When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,  
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,  
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,  
The task of new discov'ries falls on me.  
At such a season, and with such a charge,  
Once went I forth; and found, till then unknown,

A cottage, whither oft we since repair:  
'T is perch'd upon the green hill top, but close  
Environ'd with a ring of branching elms,  
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen  
Peeps at the vale below; so thick beset  
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,  
I call'd the low-roof'd lodge the *peasant's nest*.  
And, hidden as it is, and far remote  
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear  
In village or in town, the bay of curs  
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,  
And infants clam'rous whether pleas'd or pain'd,  
Oft have I wish'd the peaceful coveret mine.  
Here, I have said, at least I should possess  
The poet's treasure, Silence, and indulge  
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.  
Vain thought! the dweller in that still retreat  
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.  
Its elevated site forbids the wretch  
'To drink sweet waters of the crystal well;

He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,  
And, heavy laden, brings his bev'rage home,  
Far fetch'd and little worth ; nor seldom waits,  
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,  
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,  
Angry, and sad, and his last crust consum'd.  
So farewell envy of the *peasant's nest* !  
If solitude make scant the means of life,  
Society for me !—thou seeming sweet,  
Be still a pleasing object in my view ;  
My visit still, but never mine abode.

Not distant far, a length of colonnade  
Invites us. Monument of ancient taste,  
Now scorn'd, but worthy of a better fate.  
Our fathers knew the value of a screen  
From sultry suns : and, in their shaded walks  
And long protracted bow'rs, enjoy'd at noon  
The gloom and coolness of declining day.  
We bear our shades about us ; self-depriv'd  
Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,  
And range an Indian waste without a tree.  
Thanks to Benevolus\*—he spares me yet  
These chestnuts rang'd in corresponding lines ;  
And, though himself so polish'd, still reprieves  
The obsolete prolixity of shade.

Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast)  
A sudden steep upon a rustic bridge,  
We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip  
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.

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\* John Courtney Throckmorton, Esq., of Western Underwood.

Hence, ankle deep in moss and flow'ry thyme,  
We mount again, and feel at ev'ry step  
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,  
Rais'd by the mole, the miner of the soil.  
He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,  
Disfigures Earth: and, plotting in the dark,  
Toils much to earn a monumental pile  
That may record the mischief he has done.

The summit gain'd, behold the proud alcove  
'That crowns it! yet not all its pride secures  
The grand retreat from injuries impress'd  
By rural carvers, who with knives deface  
The panels, leaving an obscure, rude name,  
In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.  
So strong the zeal t' immortalize himself  
Beats in the breast of man, that e'en a few,  
Few transient years, won from th' abyss ab-  
horr'd

Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,  
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye;  
And, posted on this speculative height,  
Exults in its command. The sheepfold here  
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.  
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek  
The middle field; but, scatter'd by degrees,  
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.  
There from the sunburnt hayfield homeward  
creeps

The loaded wain; while, lighten'd of its charge,  
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by;  
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team  
Vocif'rous, and impatient of delay.

Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,  
Diversified with trees of ev'ry growth,  
Alike, yet various. Here the gray smooth trunks  
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,  
Within the twilight of their distant shades ;  
There, lost behind a rising ground, the wood  
Seems sunk, and shorten'd to its topmost boughs.  
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,  
Though each its hue peculiar ; paler some,  
And of a wannish gray ; the willow such,  
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,  
And ash far-stretching his umbrageous arm ;  
Of deeper green the elm ; and deeper still,  
Lord of the woods, the long surviving oak.  
Some glossy leav'd, and shining in the sun,  
The maple and the beech of oily nuts  
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve  
Diffusing odours : nor unnoted pass  
The sycamore, capricious in attire,  
Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet  
Have chang'd the woods, in scarlet honour  
bright.

O'er those, but, far beyond (a spacious map  
Of hill and valley interpos'd between)  
The Ouse, dividing the well-water'd land,  
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,  
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.  
Hence the declivity is sharp and short,  
And such the reascent ; between them weeps  
A little naiad her impov'rish'd urn  
All summer long, which winter fills again.  
The folded gates would bar my progress now,

But that the lord\* of this enclos'd demesne,  
Communicative of the good he owns  
Admits me to a share; the guiltless eye  
Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.  
Refreshing change! where now the blazing sun?  
By short transition we have lost his glare,  
And stepp'd at once into a cooler clime.  
Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn  
Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice  
'That yet a remnant of your race survives.  
How airy and how light the graceful arch,  
Yet awful as the consecrated roof  
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath  
The checker'd earth seems restless as a flood  
Brush'd by the wind. So sportive is the light  
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they  
    dance,  
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,  
And dark'ning, and enlight'ning, as the leaves  
Play wanton, ev'ry moment, ev'ry spot.  
    And now, with nerves new brac'd and spirits  
    cheer'd,  
We tread the wilderness, whose well-roll'd  
    walks,  
With curvature of slow and easy sweep—  
Deception innocent—give ample space  
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us  
    next;  
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms  
We may discern the thresher at his task.

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\* See the foregoing note.

Thump after thump resounds the constant flail,  
That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls  
Full on the destin'd ear. Wide flies the chaff,  
The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist  
Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam.  
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down,  
And sleep not; see him sweating o'er his bread  
Before he eats it.—'T is the primal curse,  
But soften'd into mercy; made the pledge  
Of cheerful days and nights without a groan.

By ceaseless action all that is subsists.  
Constant rotation of th' unwearied wheel  
That Nature rides upon, maintains her health,  
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads  
An instant's pause, and lives but while she  
moves:

Its own revolvency upholds the World,  
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,  
And fit the limpid element for use,  
Else noxious; oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams,  
All feel the fresh'ning impulse, and are cleans'd  
By restless undulation: e'en the oak  
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm:  
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel  
Th' impression of the blast with proud disdain,  
Frowning, as if in his unconscious arm  
He held the thunder: but the monarch owes  
His firm stability to what he scorns,  
More fix'd below, the more disturb'd above.  
The law, by which all creatures else are bound,  
Binds man, the Lord of all. Himself derives  
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,

From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.  
The sedentary stretch their lazy length  
When Custom bids, but no refreshment find,  
For none they need : the languid eye, the cheek  
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,  
And wither'd muscle, and the vapid soul,  
Reproach their owner with that love of rest,  
To which he forfeits e'en the rest he loves.  
Not such the alert and active. Measure life  
By its true worth, the comforts it affords,  
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name.  
Good health, and its associate in the most,  
Good temper ; spirits prompt to undertake,  
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task ;  
The pow'rs of fancy and strong thought are  
theirs ;

E'en age itself seems privileg'd in them  
With clear exemption from its own defects.  
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front  
The vet'ran shows, and, gracing a gray beard  
With youthful smiles, descends towards the  
grave

Sprightly, and old almost without decay.

Like a coy maiden, Ease, when courted most,  
Furthest retires—an idol, at whose shrine  
Who oft'nest sacrifice are favour'd least.  
The love of Nature, and the scenes she draws,  
Is nature's dictate. Strange ! there should be  
found,

Who, self-imprison'd in their proud saloons,  
Renounce the odours of the open field  
For the unscented fictions of the loom ;

Who, satisfied with only pencill'd scenes,  
Prefer to the performance of a God  
'Th' inferior wonders of an artist's hand !  
Lovely indeed the mimic works of Art ;  
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire,  
None more admires the painter's magic skill ;  
Who shows me that which I shall never see,  
Conveys a distant country into mine,  
And throws Italian light on English walls :  
But imitative strokes can do no more  
Than please the eye—sweet Nature's ev'ry  
sense.

The air salubrious of her lofty hills,  
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,  
And music of her woods—no works of man  
May rival these, these all bespeak a pow'r  
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.  
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast ;  
'T is free to all—'t is ev'ry day renew'd ;  
Who scorns it starves deservedly at home.  
He does not scorn it, who, imprison'd long  
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey  
To sallow sickness, which the vapours, dank  
And clammy, of his dark abode have bred,  
Escapes at last to liberty and light :  
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue ;  
His eye relumines its extinguish'd fires ;  
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is wing'd with  
joy,  
And riots in the sweets of ev'ry breeze.  
He does not scorn it, who has long endur'd  
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.

Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflam'd  
With acrid salts ; his very heart athirst,  
To gaze at Nature in her green array,  
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possess'd  
With visions prompted by intense desire ;  
Fair fields appear below, such as he left  
Far distant, such as he would die to find—  
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.  
—The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns ;  
The low'ring eye, the petulance, the frown,  
And sullen sadness, that o'ershade, distort,  
And mar the face of Beauty, when no cause  
For such immeasurable wo appears,  
These Flora banishes, and gives the fair  
Sweet smiles, and bloom less transient than her  
own.

It is the constant revolution, stale  
And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,  
That palls and satiates, and makes languid life  
A pedler's pack, that bows the bearer down.  
Health suffers, and the spirits ebb, the heart  
Recoils from its own choice—at the full feast  
Is famish'd—finds no music in the song,  
No smartness in the jest ; and wonders why.  
Yet thousands still desire to journey on,  
Though halt, and weary of the path they tread.  
The paralytic, who can hold her cards,  
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand,  
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort  
Her mingled suits and sequences ; and sits,  
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad

And silent cypher, while her proxy plays.  
Others are dragg'd into a crowded room  
Between supporters ; and, once seated, sit,  
Through downright inability to rise,  
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.  
These speak a loud memento. Yet e'en these  
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he  
That overhangs a torrent, to a twig.  
They love it, and yet loathe it ; fear to die,  
Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.  
Then wherefore not renounce them ? No—the  
dread,  
The slavish dread of solitude, that breeds,  
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,  
And their invet'rate habits, all forbid.

Whom call we gay ? That honour has been  
long  
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.  
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay,  
That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,  
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams  
Of day-spring overshoot his humble nest.  
The peasant too, a witness of his song,  
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.

But save me from the gayety of those,  
Whose headaches nail them to a noontday bed ;  
And save me too from theirs, whose haggard  
eyes  
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs  
For property stripp'd off by cruel chance ;  
From gayety, that fills the bones with pain,  
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with wo.

The earth was made so various, that the  
mind

Of desultory man, studious of change,  
And pleas'd with novelty, might be indulg'd.  
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen  
Till half their beauties fade: the weary sight  
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides  
off,

Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.  
Then snug enclosures in the shelter'd vale,  
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,  
Delight us; happy to renounce awhile,  
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,  
That such short absence may endear it more.  
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,  
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts  
Above the reach of man. His hoary head,  
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner  
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,  
Greeted with three cheers exulting. At his  
waist

A girdle of half-wither'd shrubs he shows,  
And at his feet the baffled billows die.  
The common, overgrown with fern, and rough  
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and de-  
form'd,

And dang'rous to the touch, has yet its bloom,  
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,  
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf  
Smells fresh, and, rich in odorif'rous herbs  
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense  
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days  
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimm'd  
With lace, and hat with splendid riband bound,  
A serving maid was she, and fell in love  
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.  
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves  
To distant shores ; and she would sit and weep  
At what a sailor suffers ; fancy too,  
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,  
Would oft anticipate his glad return,  
And dream of transports she was not to know.  
She heard the doleful tidings of his death—  
And never smil'd again ! and now she roams  
The dreary waste ; there spends the livelong  
day,

And there, unless when charity forbids,  
The livelong night. A tatter'd apron hides,  
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides, a gown  
More tatter'd still ; and both but ill conceal  
A bosom heav'd with never-ceasing sighs.  
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,  
And hoards them in her sleeve ; but needful  
food,  
Though press'd with hunger oft, or comelier  
clothes,  
Though pinch'd with cold, asks never.—Kate is  
craz'd.

I see a column of slow rising smoke  
O'ertop the lofty wood, that skirts the wild.  
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat  
Their miserable meal. A kettle, slung  
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,

Receives the morsel—flesh obscene of dog,  
Or vermin, or at best of cock purloin'd  
From his accustom'd perch. Hard faring race!  
They pick their fuel out of ev'ry hedge,  
Which, kindled with dry leaves, just saves un-  
quench'd

The spark of life. The sportive wind blows  
wide

Their flutt'ring rags, and shows a tawny skin,  
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.

Great skill have they in palmistry, and more  
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,  
Conveying worthless dross into its place;  
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they  
steal.

Strange! that a creature rational, and cast  
In human mould, should brutalize by choice  
His nature; and, though capable of arts,  
By which the world might profit, and himself  
Self-banish'd from society, prefer  
Such squalid sloth to honourable toil!  
Yet even these, though feigning sickness oft  
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping  
limb,

And vex their flesh with artificial sores,  
Can change their whine into a mirthful note,  
When safe occasion offers; and with dance,  
And music of the bladder and the bag,  
Beguile their woes, and make the woods  
resound.

Such health and gayety of heart enjoy  
The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;

And, breathing wholesome air, and wand'ring  
much,

Need other physic none to heal th' effects  
Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.

Blest he, though undistinguish'd from the  
crowd

By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure,  
Where man by nature fierce has laid aside  
His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to  
learn,

The manners and the arts of civil life.  
His wants indeed are many ; but supply  
Is obvious, plac'd within the easy reach  
Of temp'rate wishes and industrious hands.  
Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil ;  
Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,  
And terrible to sight, as when she springs,  
(If e'er she spring spontaneously,) in remote  
And barb'rous climes, where violence prevails,  
And strength is lord of all ; but gentle, kind,  
By culture tam'd, by liberty refreshed,  
And all her fruits by radiant truth matur'd.

War and the chase engross the savage whole ;  
War follow'd for revenge or to supplant  
The envied tenants of some happier spot :  
The chase for sustenance, precarious trust !  
His hard condition with severe constraint  
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth  
Of wisdom, proves a school, in which he learns  
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,  
Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.  
Thus fare the shiv'ring natives of the north,

And thus the rangers of the western world,  
Where it advances far into the deep,  
Tow'rd's the antarctic. E'en the favour'd isles  
So lately found, although the constant sun  
Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,  
Can boast but little virtue ; and inert  
Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain  
In manners—victims of luxurious ease.  
These therefore I can pity, plac'd remote  
From all that science traces, art invents,  
Or inspiration teaches ; and enclos'd  
In boundless oceans never to be pass'd  
By navigators uninform'd as they,  
Or plough'd perhaps by British bark again.  
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,  
Thee, gentle savage !\* whom no love of thee  
Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,  
Or else vain glory, promoted us to draw  
Forth from thy native bow'rs, to show thee here  
With what superior skill we can abuse  
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.  
The dream is past ; and thou hast found again  
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,  
And homestall thatch'd with leaves. But hast  
thou found  
Their former charms? And, having seen our  
state,  
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp  
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,  
And heard our music ; are thy simple friends,

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\*Omai.

Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights,  
As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys  
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?  
Rude as thou art, (for we return'd thee rude  
And ignorant, except of outward show,)  
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart  
And spiritless, as never to regret  
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.  
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,  
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot,  
If ever it has wash'd our distant shore,  
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,  
A patriot's for his country: thou art sad  
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,  
From which no pow'r of thine can raise her up.  
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,  
Perhaps errs little, when she paints thee thus.  
She tells me too, that duly ev'ry morn  
Thou climb'st the mountam top, with eager eye  
Exploring far and wide the wat'ry waste  
For sight of ship from England. Ev'ry speck  
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale  
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.  
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,  
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepar'd  
To dream all night of what the day denied.  
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait  
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,  
Disinterested good, is not our trade.  
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought;  
And must be brib'd to compass Earth again  
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue in the mild  
And genial soil of cultivated life  
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,  
Yet not in cities oft : in proud, and gay,  
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,  
As to a common and most noisome sewer,  
The dregs and feculence of every land.  
In cities, foul example on most minds  
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds,  
In gross and pamper'd cities, sloth, and lust,  
And wantonness, and gluttonous excess.  
In cities, vice is hidden with most ease,  
Or seen with least reproach ; and virtue, taught  
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there  
Beyond th' achievement of successful flight.  
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,  
In which they flourish most ; where in the  
    beams  
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye  
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.  
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd  
The fairest capital of all the world,  
By riot and Incontinence the worst.  
There touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank  
    becomes  
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees  
All her reflected features. Bacon there  
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,  
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.  
Nor does the chisel occupy alone  
The pow'rs of sculpture, but the style as much ;  
Each province of her art her equal care.

With nice incision of her guided steel  
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil  
So sterile with what charms soe'er she will,  
The richest scenery and the loveliest forms.  
Where finds Philosophy her eagle eye,  
With which she gazes at yon burning disk  
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?  
In London. Where her implements exact,  
With which she calculates, computes and scans,  
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now  
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?  
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,  
So rich, so throng'd, so drain'd, and so sup-  
plied,

As London—opulent, enlarg'd, and still  
Increasing London? Babylon of old  
Not more the glory of the Earth, than she,  
A more accomplish'd world's chief glory now.

She has her praise. Now mark a spot or  
two,

That so much beauty would do well to purge;  
And show this queen of cities, that so fair,  
May yet be foul; so witty, yet not wise.  
It is not seemly, nor of good report,  
That she is slack in discipline; more prompt  
T' avenge than to prevent the breach of law:  
That she is rigid in denouncing death  
On petty robbers, and indulges life,  
And liberty, and oftentimes honour too,  
To speculators of the public gold:  
That thieves at home must hang; but he that  
puts

Into his overgorg'd and bloated purse  
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.  
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,  
That, through profane and infidel contempt  
Of holy writ, she has presum'd t' annul  
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,  
The total ordinance and will of God ;  
Advancing Fashion to the post of Truth,  
And centring all authority in modes  
And customs of her own, till sabbath rites  
Have dwindled into unrespected forms,  
And knees and hassacks are well-nigh divorc'd.

God made the country, and man made the  
town.

What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts  
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught  
That life holds out to all, should most abound  
And least be threaten'd in the fields and  
groves ?

Possess ye, therefore, ye who, borne about  
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue  
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes  
But such as art contrives, possess ye still  
Your element, there only can ye shine ;  
There only minds like yours can do no harm.  
Our groves were planted to console at noon  
The pensive wand'rer in their shades. At eve  
The moon-beam, sliding softly in between  
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,  
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare  
The splendour of your lamps ; they but eclipse  
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound

Our more harmonious notes: the thrush de-  
parts

Scar'd, and th' offended nightingale is mute.

Their is a public mischief in your mirth:

It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,

Grac'd with a sword, and worthier of a fan,

Has made, what enemies could ne'er have  
done,

Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,

A mutilated structure soon to fall.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK II.

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### THE TIME-PIECE.

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#### ARGUMENT OF THE SECOND BOOK.

Reflections suggested by the conclusion of the former book—Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow—Prodigies enumerated—Sicilian earthquakes—Man rendered obnoxious to these calamities by sin—God the agent in them—The philosophy that stops at secondary causes reproved—Our own late miscarriages accounted for—Satirical notice taken of our trips to Fontainebleau—But the pulpit, not satire, the proper engine of reformation—The Reverend Advertiser of engraved sermons—Petit-maitre parson—The good preacher—Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb—Story-tellers and jesters in the pulpit reproved—Apostrophe to popular applause—Retailers of ancient philosophy expostulated with—Sum of the whole matter—Effects of sacerdotal mismanagement on the laity—Their folly and extravagance—The mischiefs of profusion—Profusion itself, with all its consequent evils, ascribed, as to its principal cause, to the want of discipline in the universities.

O FOR a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,  
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,  
Of unsuccessful or successful war,  
Might never reach me more ! My ear is pain'd,  
My soul is sick with ev'ry day's report  
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.  
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart ;  
It does not feel for man ; the natural bond  
Of brotherhood is sever'd, as the flax,  
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.  
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin  
Not colour'd like his own ; and having pow'r  
T' enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause  
Dooms and devotes him as a lawful prey.  
Lands intersected by a narrow frith  
Abhor each other. Mountains interpos'd  
Make enemies of nations, who had else  
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.  
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys ;  
And worse than all, and most to be deplor'd,  
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,  
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat  
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart,  
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.  
Then what is man ? And what man, seeing this,  
And having human feelings, does not blush,  
And hang his head, to think himself a man ?  
I would not have a slave to till my ground,  
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,  
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth  
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.

No : dear as freedom is, and in my heart's  
Just estimation priz'd above all price,  
I had much rather be myself the slave,  
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.  
We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad ?  
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave  
That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.  
Slaves cannot breathe in England ; if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free ;  
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.  
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud  
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it, then,  
And let it circulate through ev'ry vein  
Of all your empire : that, where Britain's pow'r  
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

Sure there is need of social intercourse,  
Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,  
Between the nations, in a world that seems  
To toll the death-bell of its own disease,  
And by the voice of all its elements  
To preach the gen'ral doom.\* When were the  
winds

Let slip with such a warrant to destroy ?  
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap  
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry ?  
Fires from beneath, and meteors† from above,  
Portentous, unexampled, unexplain'd  
Have kindled beacons in the skies ; and th' old  
And crazy Earth has had her shaking fits

---

\* Alluding to the calamities in Jamaica,

† August, 18, 1783.

More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.  
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props  
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,  
And Nature with a dim and sickly eye\*  
To wait the close of all? But grant her end  
More distant, and that prophecy demands  
A longer respite, unaccomplish'd yet:  
Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak  
Displeasure in his breast who smites the Earth  
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.  
And 'tis but seemly, that, where all deserve  
And stand expos'd by common peccancy  
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,  
And brethren in calamity should love.

Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now  
Lie scatter'd, where the shapely columns stood.  
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets  
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord  
Are silent. Revelry, and dance, and show,  
Suffer a syncope and solemn pause;  
While God performs upon the trembling stage  
Of his own works his dreadful part alone.  
How does the earth receive him? with what signs  
Of gratulation and delight her king?  
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,  
Her sweetest flow'rs, her aromattick gums,  
Disclosing Paradise where'er he treads?  
She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb,  
Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps

---

\* Alluding to the fog that covered both Europe and Asia during the whole summer of 1783.

And fiery caverns roars beneath his foot.  
The hills move lightly, and the mountains smoke,  
For he has touch'd them. From th' extremest  
point  
Of elevation down into the abyss  
His wrath is busy, and his frown is felt.  
The rocks fall headlong, and the valleys rise,  
The rivers die into offensive pools,  
And, charg'd with putrid verdure, breathe a gross  
And mortal nuisance into all the air.  
What solid was, by transformation strange,  
Grows fluid ; and the fix'd and rooted earth,  
Tormented into billows, heaves and swells,  
Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl  
Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense  
The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs  
And agonies of human and of brute  
Multitudes, fugitive on ev'ry side,  
And fugitive in vain. The sylvan scene  
Migrates uplifted : and, with all its soil  
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out  
A new possessor, and survives the change.  
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and, upwrought  
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,  
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice  
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore  
Resistless. Never such a sudden flood,  
Upridg'd so high, and sent on such a charge,  
Possess'd an inland scene. Where now the  
throng  
That press'd the beach, and, hasty to depart,  
Look'd to the sea for safety? They are gone,

Gone with the reflux wave into the deep—  
A prince with half his people ! Ancient tow'rs,  
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes  
Where beauty oft and letter'd worth consume  
Life in the unproductive shades of death,  
Fall prone : the pale inhabitants come forth,  
And, happy in their unforeseen release  
From all the rigours of restraint, enjoy  
The terrors of the day that sets them free.  
Who, then, that has thee, would not hold thee  
fast

Freedom ! whom they that lose thee so regret,  
That e'en a judgment, making way for thee,  
Seems in their eyes a mercy for thy sake ?  
Such evil Sin hath wrought ; and such a flame  
Kindled in Heav'n, that it burns down to Earth,  
And in the furious inquest that it makes  
On God's behalf, lays waste his fairest works.  
The very elements, though each be meant  
The minister of man, to serve his wants,  
Conspire against him. With his breath he draws  
A plague into his blood ; and cannot use  
Life's necessary means, but he must die.  
Storms rise t' o'erwhelm him ; or if stormy winds  
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,  
And, needing none assistance of the storm,  
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.  
The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,  
Or make his house his grave : nor so content,  
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,  
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs.  
What then !—were they the wicked above all,

And we the righteous, whose fast-anchor'd isle  
Mov'd not, while theirs was rock'd, like a light  
skiff,

The sport of every wave? No; none are clear,  
And none than we more guilty. But, where all  
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts  
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark:  
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn  
The more malignant. If he spar'd not them,  
Tremble and be amaz'd at thine escape,  
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee!

Happy the man, who sees a God employ'd  
In all the good and ill that checker life!  
Resolving all events, with their effects  
And manifold results, into the will  
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.  
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend  
The least of our concerns; (since from the least  
The greatest oft originate;) could chance  
Find place in his dominion, or dispose  
One lawless particle to thwart his plan;  
Then God might be surpris'd, and unforeseen  
Contingence might alarm him, and disturb  
The smooth and equal course of his affairs.  
This true Philosophy, though eagle-ey'd  
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks;  
And, having found his instrument, forgets,  
Or disregards, or, more presumptuous still,  
Denies the power that wields it. God proclaims  
His hot displeasure against foolish men,  
That live an atheist life; involves the Heavens  
In tempests; quits his grasp upon the winds,

And gives them all their fury ; bids a plague  
Kindle a fiery bile upon the skin,  
And putrefy the breath of blooming Health.  
He calls for Famine, and the meagre fiend  
Blows mildew from between his shrivell'd lips,  
And taints the golden ear. He springs his mines,  
And desolates a nation at a blast.  
Forth steps the spruce Philosopher, and tells  
Of homogeneal and discordant springs,  
And principles ; of causes how they work  
By necessary laws their sure effects  
Of action and reaction : he has found  
The source of the disease that nature feels,  
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.  
Thou fool ? will thy discov'ry of the cause  
Suspend th' effect, or heal it ? Has not God  
Still wrought by means since first he made the  
world ?

And did he not of old employ his means  
To drown it ? What is his creation less,  
Than a capacious reservoir of means,  
Form'd for his use, and ready at his will ?  
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve ; ask of Him  
Or ask of whomesoever he has taught ;  
And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still—  
My country ! and while yet a nook is left,  
Where English minds and manners may be  
found,  
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Though thy  
clime  
Be fickle, and thy year most part deform'd

With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,  
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,  
And fields without a flow'r, for warmer France  
With all her vines : nor for Ausonia's groves  
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bow'rs.  
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime  
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire  
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task :  
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake  
Thy joys and sorrows, with as true a heart  
As any thund'rer there. And I can feel  
Thy follies too ; and with a just disdain  
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks  
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.  
How in the name of soldiership and sense,  
Should England prosper, when such things, as  
smooth

And tender as a girl, all essenc'd o'er  
With odours, and as profligate as sweet ;  
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,  
And love when they should fight : when such  
as these

Presume to lay their hand upon the ark  
Of her magnificent and awful cause ;  
Time was when it was praise and boast enough  
In every clime, and travel where we might,  
That we were born her children. Praise enough  
Th fill th' ambition of a private man  
That Chatham's language was his mother-tongue,  
And Wolf's great name compatriot with his own.  
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them  
The hope of such hereafter ! They have fall'n

Each in his field of glory ; one in arms,  
And one in council—Wolfe upon the lap  
Of smiling Victory that moment won,  
And Chatham heart-sick of his country's shame !  
They made us many soldiers. Chatham, still  
Consulting England's happiness at home,  
Secur'd it by an unforgiving frown,  
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,  
Put so much of his heart into his act,  
That his example had a magnet's force,  
And all were swift to follow whom all lov'd.  
Those suns are set. O rise some other such !  
Or all that we have left is empty talk  
Of old achievements and despair of new.

Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float  
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck  
With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,  
That no rude savour maritime invade  
The nose of nice nobility ! Breathe soft,  
Ye clarionets ; and softer still, ye flutes ;  
That winds and waters, lull'd by magick sounds  
May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore.  
True, we have lost an empire—let it pass.  
True, we may thank the perfidy of France,  
That pick'd the jewel out of England's crown,  
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.  
And let that pass—'twas but a trick of state—  
A brave man knows no malice, but at once  
Forgets in peace the injuries of war,  
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.  
And sham'd as we have been, to th' very beard  
Brav'd and defied, and in our own sea prov'd

Too weak for those decisive blows that once  
Ensur'd us mast'ry there, we yet retain  
Some small pre-eminence ; we justly boast  
At least superiour jockeyship, and claim  
The honours of the turf as all our own !  
Go, then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,  
And show the shame ye might conceal at home,  
In foreign eyes !—be grooms and win the plate,  
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown !—  
'Tis gen'rous to communicate your skill  
To those that need it. Folly is soon learn'd :  
And under such preceptors who can fail ?

There is a pleasure in poetick pains,  
Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,  
Th' expedients and inventions multiform,  
To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms,  
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win—  
T' arrest the fleeting images, that fill  
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,  
And force them sit, till he has pencil'd off  
A faithful likeness of the forms he views ;  
Then to dispose his copies with such art,  
That each may find its most propitious light,  
And shine by situation, hardly less  
Than by the labour and the skill it cost ;  
Are occupations of the poet's mind  
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought,  
With such address from themes of sad import,  
That, lost in his own musings, happy man !  
He feels the anxieties of life denied  
Their wonted entertainment ; all retire.  
Such joys has he that sings. But ah ! not such,

Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.  
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps  
Aware of nothing arduous in a task  
They never undertook, they little note  
His dangers or escapes, and haply find  
Their least amusement where he found the most.  
But is amusement all? Studious of song,  
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,  
I would not trifle merely, though the world  
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.  
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?  
It may correct a foible, may chastise  
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,  
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch,  
But where are its sublimer trophies found?  
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaim'd  
By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?  
Alas! Leviathan is not so tam'd:  
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and stricken hard,  
Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,  
That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit, therefore—(and I name it fill'd  
With solemn awe, that bids me well beware  
With what intent I touch that holy thing)—  
The pulpit—(when the sat'rist has at last,  
Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,  
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte)—  
I say the pulpit (in the sober use  
Of its legitimate peculiar pow'rs)  
Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall  
stand,  
The most important and effectual guard,

Support, and ornament, of Virtue's cause.  
There stands the messenger of truth; there  
stands

The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,  
His office sacred, his credentials clear.

By him the violated law speaks out

Its thunders: and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.

He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,  
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,  
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete

Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms  
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule  
Of holy discipline, to glorious war

The sacramental host of God's elect:

Are all such teachers?—would to Heav'n all  
were!

But hark—the doctor's voice!—fast wedg'd be-  
tween

Two empiricks he stands, and with swoln cheeks

Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far

Than all invective is his bold harangue,

While through that publick organ of report

He hails the clergy; and, defying shame,

Announces to the world his own and theirs!

He teaches those to read whom schools dismiss'd,

And colleges, untaught: sells accent, tone,

And emphasis in score, and gives to pray'r

Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.

He grinds divinity of other days

Down into modern use; transforms old print

To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes

Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.  
Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware ?  
O, name it not in Gath !—it cannot be,  
That grave and learned clerks should need such  
aid.

He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,  
Assuming thus a rank unknown before—  
Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church ! .

I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,  
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and  
whose life,

Coincident, exhibit lucid proof  
That he is honest in the sacred cause.  
To such I render more than mere respect,  
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.  
But loose in morals and in manners vain,  
In conversation frivolous, in dress  
Extreme at once rapacious and profuse ;  
Frequent in park with lady at his side,  
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes ;  
But rare at home, and never at his books,  
Or with his pen, save when he scrawls a card ;  
Constant at routs, familiar with a round  
Of ladyships, a stranger to the poor ;  
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,  
And well prepar'd by ignorance and sloth,  
By infidelity and love of world,  
'To make God's work a sinecure ; a slave  
'To his own pleasures and his patron's pride ;  
From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,  
Preserve the church ! and lay not careless hands  
On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,  
Were he on Earth, would hear, approve, and  
own,

Paul should himself direct me. I would trace  
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.

I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;

In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,

And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,

And natural in gesture ; much impress'd

Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,

And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds

May feel it too ; affectionate in look,

And tender in address, as well becomes

A messenger of grace to guilty men.

Behold the picture !—Is it like ?—Like whom ?

The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,

And then skip down again ? pronounce a text ?

Cry—hem ; and, reading what they never wrote

Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,

And with a well bred whisper close the scene !

In man or woman, but far most in man

And most of all in man that ministers

And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe

All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn ;

Object of my implacable disgust.

What !—will a man play tricks—will he indulge

A silly fond conceit of his fair form,

And just proportion, fashionable mein,

And pretty face, in presence of his God ?

Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,

As with the diamond on his lily hand,

And play his brilliant parts before my eyes,

When I am hungry for the bread of life ?  
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames  
His noble office, and, instead of truth,  
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock.  
Therefore avaunt all attitude and stare,  
And start theatrick, practis'd at the glass !  
I seek divine simplicity in him  
Who handles things divine ; and all besides,  
Though learn'd with labour, and though much  
    admir'd

By curious eyes and judgment ill-inform'd,  
To me is odious as the nasal twang  
Heard at conventicle where worthy men,  
Misled by custom, strain celestial themes  
Through the press'd nostril, spectacle-bestrid.  
Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,  
That task perform'd, relapse into themselves ;  
And, having spoken wisely, at the close  
Grow wanton, and give proof to ev'ry eye,  
Whoe'er was edify'd, themselves were not !  
Forth comes the pocket-mirror. First we stroke  
An eyebrow ; next compose a straggling lock,  
Then with an air most gracefully perform'd,  
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,  
And lay it at its ease with gentle care,  
With handkerchief in hand depending low ;  
The better hand more busy gives the nose  
Its bergamot, or aids th' indebted eye  
With op'ra glass, to watch the moving scene,  
And recognize the slow retiring fair.—  
Now this is fulsome ; and offends me more  
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect

And rustic coarseness would. A heavenly mind  
 May be indiff'rent to her house of clay,  
 And slight the hovel as beneath her care ;  
 But how a body so fantastic, trim,  
 And quaint, in its deportment and attire,  
 Can lodge a heav'nly mind—demands a doubt.

He that negotiates between God and man,  
 As God's ambassador, the grand concerns  
 Of judgment and of mercy, should beware  
 Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful  
 'To court a grin, when you should woo a soul :  
 To break a jest, when pity would inspire  
 Pathetick exhortation ; and t' address  
 The skittish fancy with facetious tales,  
 When sent with God's commission to the heart !  
 So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip  
 Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,  
 And I consent you take it for your text,  
 Your only one, till sides and benches fail.  
 No: he was serious in a serious cause,  
 And understood too well the weighty terms,  
 That he had ta'en in charge. He would not  
 stoop

To conquer those by jocular exploits,  
 Whom truth and soberness assail'd in vain.

O Popular Applause ! what heart of man  
 Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms ?  
 The wisest and the best feel urgent need  
 Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales ;  
 But swell'd into a gust—who, then, alas !  
 With all his canvass set, and inexpert,  
 And therefore heedless, can withstand thy pow'r ?

Praise from the rivell'd lips of toothless, bald  
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean  
And craving Poverty, and in the bow  
Respectful of the smutch'd artificer,  
Is oft too welcome and may much disturb  
'The bias of the purpose. How much more,  
Pour'd forth by beauty splendid and polite,  
In language soft as Adoration breathes?  
Ah, spare your idol, think him human still.  
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too!  
Dote not too much nor spoil what ye admire.

All truth is from the sempiternal source  
Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome,  
Drew from the stream below. More favor'd, we  
Drink when we choose it, at the fountain head.  
To them it flow'd much mingled and defil'd  
With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams  
Illusive of philosophy, so call'd,  
But falsely. Sages after sages strove  
In vain to filter off a crystal draught  
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanc'd  
The thirst than slak'd it, and not seldom bred  
Intoxication and delirium wild.

In vain they push'd inquiry to the birth  
And spring time of the world; ask'd, Whence  
is man?

Why form'd at all? and wherefore as he is?  
Where must he find his maker? with what rites  
Adore him? Will he hear, accept, and bless?  
Or does he sit regardless of his works?  
Has man within him an immortal seed?  
Or does the tomb take all? If he survive

His ashes, where ? and in what weal or wo ?  
Knots worthy of solution, which alone  
A Deity could solve. Their answers, vague  
And all at random, fabulous and dark,  
Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of  
life

Defective and unsanction'd, prov'd too weak  
To bind the roving appetite, and lead  
Blind nature to a God not yet reveal'd.  
'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,  
Explains all mysteries, except her own,  
And so illuminates the path of life  
That fools discover it, and stray no more.  
Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,  
My man of morals, nurtur'd in the shades  
Of Academus—is this false or true ?  
Is Christ the abler teacher or the schools ?  
If Christ, then why resort at ev'ry turn  
To Athens, or to Rome, for wisdom short  
Of man's occasions, when in him reside  
Grace, knowledge, comfort, an unfathom'd store ?  
How oft, when Paul has serv'd us with a text,  
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully, preach'd !  
Men that, if now alive, would sit content  
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,  
Preach it who might. Such was their love of  
truth,

Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too.

And thus it is.—The pastor, either vain  
By nature, or by flatt'ry made so, taught  
To gaze at his own splendour, and t' exalt  
Absurdly, not his office, but himself ;

Or unenlighten'd and too proud to learn ;  
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach ;  
Perverting often by the stress of lewd  
And loose example, whom he should instruct ;  
Exposes, and holds up to broad disgrace,  
The noblest function, and discredits much  
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.  
For ghostly counsel ; if it either fall  
Below the exigence, or be not back'd  
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof  
Of some sincerity on the giver's part ;  
Or be dishonour'd in th' exterior form  
And mode of its conveyance, by such tricks  
As move derision, or by foppish airs  
And histrionick mum'm'ry that let down  
The pulpit to the level of the stage ;  
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.  
The weak perhaps are mov'd, but are not  
taught,  
While prejudice in men of stronger minds  
Takes deeper root, confirm'd by what they see.  
A relaxation of religion's hold  
Upon the roving and untutor'd heart  
Soon follows, and, the curb of conscience snapp'd  
The laity run wild. But do they now ?  
Note their extravagance, and be convinc'd.  
As nations, ignorant of God, contrive  
A wooden one : so we, no longer taught  
By monitors, that mother church supplies,  
Now make our own. Posterity will ask,  
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine.)  
Some fifty or a hundred lustrums hence,

What was a monitor in George's days ?  
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,  
Of whom I needs must augur better things,  
Since Heav'n would sure grow weary of a world  
Productive only of a race like ours,  
A monitor is wood—plank shaven thin.  
We wear it at our backs. There, closely brac'd  
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard  
The prominent and most unsightly bones,  
And binds the shoulder flat. We prove its use  
Sov'reign and most effectual to secure  
A form, not now gymnastick as of yore,  
From rickets, and distortion, else our lot.  
But thus admonish'd, we can walk erect—  
One proof at least of manhood ! while the friend  
Sticks close, a Mentor worthy of his charge.  
Our habits, costlier than Lucullus wore,  
And by caprice as multiplied as his,  
Just please us while the fashion is at full,  
But change with ev'ry moon. The sycophant,  
Who waits to dress us, arbitrates their date ;  
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye ;  
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,  
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceiv'd ;  
And, making prize of all that he condemns,  
With our expenditure defrays his own.  
Variety's the very spice of life,  
That gives it all its flavour. We have run  
Through ev'ry change, that Fancy at the loom  
Exhausted, has had genius to supply ;  
And studious of mutation still, discard  
A real elegance, a little us'd,

For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.  
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys  
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar  
dry,  
And keeps our larder lean ; puts out our fires ;  
And introduces hunger, frost, and wo,  
Where peace and hospitality might reign.  
What man that lives, and that knows how to  
live,  
Would fail t' exhibit at the public shows  
A form as splendid as the proudest there,  
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost ?  
A man o' th' town dines late, but soon enough,  
With reasonable forecast and despatch,  
T' insure a side box station at half price.  
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,  
His daily fare as delicate. Alas !  
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems  
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet !  
The rout is Folly's circle, which she draws  
With magick wand. So potent is the spell,  
That none, decoy'd into that fatal ring,  
Unless by Heav'n's peculiar grace, escape.  
There we grow early gray, but never wise ;  
There form connexions, but acquire no friend ;  
Solicit pleasure hopeless of success ;  
Waste youth in occupations only fit  
For second childhood, and devote old age  
To sports, which only childhood could excuse.  
There, they are happiest who dissemble best  
Their weariness ; and they the most polite  
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,

Though at their own destruction. She that asks  
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them  
all,

And hates their coming. They (what can they  
less ?)

Make just reprisals ; and with cringe and shrug,  
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.

All catch the frenzy, downward from her grace,  
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning  
skies,

And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,  
To her, who, frugal only that her thrift

May feed excesses she can ill afford,

Is hackney'd home unlackey'd ; who, in haste  
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,

And, at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,  
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.

Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their  
wives,

On fortune's velvet altar off'ring up

Their last poor pittance—Fortune, most severe  
Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far

Than all that held their routs in Juno's Heav'n.—

So fare we in this prison-house, the World ;

And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see

So many maniacs dancing in their chains.

They gaze upon the links, that hold them fast,

With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,

Then shake them in despair, and dance again !

Now basket up the family of plagues,

That waste our vitals ; peculation, sale

Of honour, perjury, corruption, frauds

By forgery, by subterfuge of law,  
By tricks and lies as num'rous and as keen  
As the necessities their authors feel :  
Then cast them, closely bundled, ev'ry brat  
At the right door. Profusion is the sire.  
Profusion unrestrain'd with all that's base  
In character, has litter'd all the land,  
And bred, within the mem'ry of no few,  
A priesthood, such as Baal's was of old,  
A people, such as never was till now.  
It is a hungry vice :—it eats up all  
That gives society its beauty, strength,  
Convenience, security, and use :  
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapp'd  
And gibbeted, as fast as catchpole claws  
Can seize the slippery prey : unties the knot  
Of union, and converts the sacred band  
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.  
Profusion deluging a state with lusts  
Of grossest nature and of worst effects.  
Prepares it for its ruin : hardens, blinds,  
And warps, the consciences of publick men,  
Till they can laugh at Virtue ; mock the fools  
That trust them ; and in th' end disclose a face,  
That would have shock'd Credulity herself.  
Unmask'd, vouchsafing this their sole excuse—  
Since all alike are selfish, why not they ?  
This does Profusion, and th' accursed cause  
Of such deep mischief has itself a cause.

In colleges and halls in ancient days,  
When learning, virtue, piety and truth,  
Were precious and inculcated with care,

There dwelt a sage call'd Discipline. His head,  
Not yet by time completely silver'd o'er,  
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth  
But strong for service still, and unimpair'd.  
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile  
Play'd on his lips ; and in his speech was heard  
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.  
The occupation dearest to his heart  
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke  
The head of modest and ingenuous worth.  
That blush'd at his own praise : and press the  
youth  
Close to his side that pleas'd him. Learning  
grew  
Beneath his care, a thriving vig'rous plant ;  
The mind was well informed, the passions held  
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.  
If e'er it chanc'd, as sometimes chance it must  
That one among so many overleap'd  
The limits of control, his gentle eye  
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke ;  
His frown was full of terrour, and his voice  
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe,  
As left him not, till penitence had won  
Lost favour back again, and clos'd the breach.  
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,  
Declin'd at length into the vale of years.  
A palsy struck his arm ; his sparkling eye  
Was quenched in rheums of age ; his voice un-  
strung,  
Grew tremulous, and mov'd derision more  
Than rev'rence, in perverse rebellious youth.

So colleges and halls neglected much  
Their good old friend ; and Discipline at length,  
O'erlook'd and unemploy'd, fell sick and died.  
Then Study languished, Emulation slept,  
And Virtue fled. The schools became a scene  
Of solemn farce, where Ignorance in stilts,  
His cap well lin'd with logick not his own,  
With parrot tongue perform'd the scholar's part,  
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.

Then compromise had place, and scrutiny  
Became stone blind ; precedence went in truck,  
And he was competent whose purse was so.  
A dissolution of all bonds ensued ;  
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth  
Of headstrong youth were broken ; bars and  
bolts

Grew rusty by disuse ; and massy gates  
Forgot their office, op'ning with a touch ;  
Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade,  
The tassel'd cap and the spruce band a jest,  
A mock'ry of the World ! What need of these  
For gamesters, jockeys, brothelers impure,  
Spendthrifts, and booted sportsmen, oft'ner seen  
With belted waist and pointers at their heels,  
Than in the bounds of duty ? What was learn'd,  
If aught was learn'd in childhood, is forgot :  
And such expense, as pinches parents blue,  
And mortifies the lib'ral hand of love,  
Is squander'd in pursuit of idle sports  
And vicious pleasures ; buys the boy a name  
That sits a stigma on his father's house,  
And cleaves through life inseparably close

To him that wears it. What can after games  
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,  
The lewd vain world, that must receive him soon,  
Add to such erudition, thus acquired,  
Where science and where virtue are professed ?  
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast  
His folly, but to spoil him is a task  
That bids defiance to th' united powers  
Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.  
Now blame we most the nurselings or the nurse ?  
The children crook'd, and twisted, and deform'd,  
Through want of care; or her, whose winking eye  
And slumb'ring oscitancy mars the brood ?  
The nurse, no doubt. Regardless of her charge,  
She needs herself correction ; needs to learn  
That it is dang'rous sporting with the world,  
With things so sacred as a nation's trust,  
The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge.

All are not such. I had a brother once—  
Peace to the memory of a man of worth,  
A man of letters, and of manners too !  
Of manners sweet as Virtue always wears,  
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.  
He grac'd a college,\* in which order yet  
Was sacred ; and was honour'd, lov'd, and wept  
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.  
Some minds are temper'd happily, and mix'd  
With such ingredients of good sense, and taste  
Of what is excellent in man, they thirst

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\* Bene't Coll. Cambridge.

With such a zeal to be what they approve,  
That no restraints can circumscribe them more  
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's  
sake.

Nor can example hurt them ; what they see  
Of vice in others but enhancing more  
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.  
If such escape contagion, and emerge  
Pure from so foul a pool to shine abroad,  
And give the world their talents and themselves,  
Small thanks to those whose negligence or  
sloth

Expos'd their inexperience to the snare,  
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then the quiver broken and decay'd  
In which are kept our arrows ! Rusting there  
In wild disorder, and unfit for use,  
What wonder, if discharg'd into the world,  
They shame their shooters with a random  
flight,  
Their points obtuse, and feathers drunk with  
wine !

Well may the church wage unsuccessful war  
With such artil'ry arm'd. Vice parries wide  
Th' undreaded volley with a sword of straw,  
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.

Have we not track'd the felon home, and  
found  
His birthplace and his dam ? The country  
mourns,

Mourns because ev'ry plague that can infest  
Society, and that saps and worms the base

Of th' edifice that policy has rais'd,  
Swarms in all quarters : meets the eye, the ear,  
And suffocates the breath at ev'ry turn.  
Profusion breeds them ; and the cause itself  
Of that calamitous mischief has been found :  
Found, too, where most offensive, in the skirts  
Of the rob'd pedagogue ! Else let th' arraign'd  
Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.  
So when the Jewish leader stretch'd his arm,  
And wav'd his rod divine, a race obscene,  
Spawn'd in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,  
Polluting Egypt : gardens, fields, and plains,  
Were cover'd with the pest ; the streets were  
filled ;  
The croaking nuisance lurk'd in ev'ry nook ;  
Nor places, nor even chambers, 'scap'd ;  
And the land stank—so num'rous was the fry.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK III.

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### THE GARDEN.

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#### ARGUMENT OF THE THIRD BOOK.

Self-recollection, and reproof—Address to domestic happiness—Some account of myself—The vanity of many of their pursuits, who are reputed wise—Justification of my censures—Divine illumination necessary to the most expert philosopher—The question, What is truth? answered by other questions—Domestic happiness addressed again—Few lovers of the country—My tame hare—Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden—Pruning—Framing—Greenhouse—Sowing of flower seeds—The country preferable to the town even in the winter—Reasons why it is deserted at that season—Ruinous effects of gaming and of expensive improvement—Book concludes with an apostrophe to the metropolis.

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As one, who long in thickets and in brakes  
Entangled, winds now this way and now that  
His devious course uncertain, seeking home;  
Or, having long in miry ways been foil'd

And sore discomfited, from slough to slough  
Plunging, and half despairing of escape ;  
If chance at length he find a greensward smooth  
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise,  
He cherups brisk his ear-erecting steed,  
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease.  
So I, designing other themes, and call'd  
T' adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,  
To tell its slumbers, and to paint its dreams,  
Have rambled wide. In country, city, seat  
Of academic fame, (howe'er deserv'd,)  
Long held, and scarcely disengag'd at last :  
But now with pleasant pace a cleanlier road  
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,  
Courageous, and refresh'd for future toil,  
If toil await me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and sounding boards reflect  
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,  
What chance that I, to fame so little known,  
Nor conversant with men or manners much,  
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope  
Crack the satiric thong ? 'Twere wiser far  
For me, enamour'd of sequester'd scenes,  
And charm'd with rural beauty, to repose  
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or  
vine,  
My languid limbs ; when summer sears the  
plains ;  
Or, when rough winter rages, on the soft  
And shelter'd Sofa, while the nitrous air  
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a cheerful  
hearth ;

There, undisturb'd by Folly, and appriz'd  
How great the danger of disturbing her,  
To muse in silence, or at least confine  
Remarks, that gall so many, to the few  
My partners in retreat. Disgust conceal'd  
Is oftentimes proof of wisdom, when the fault  
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss  
Of Paradise, that has surviv'd the fall !  
Though few now taste thee unimpair'd and pure,  
Or tasting, long enjoy thee ! too infirm,  
Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets  
Unmix'd with drops of bitter, which neglect  
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup ;  
Thou art the nurse of Virtue—in thine arms  
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,  
Heav'n-born, and destin'd to the skies again.  
Thou art not known where Pleasure is ador'd,  
That reeling goddess, with the zoneless waist  
And wand'ring eyes, still leaning on the arm  
Of Novelty, her fickle, frail support ;  
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,  
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love,  
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield,  
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made  
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown !  
Till prostitution elbows us aside  
In all our crowded streets ; and senates seem  
Conven'd for purposes of empire less  
Than to release the adult'ress from her bond.  
Th' adult'ress ! what a theme for angry verse !  
What provocation to th' indignant heart,

That feels for injur'd love ! but I disdain  
The nauseous task to paint her as she is.  
Cruel, abandon'd, glorying in her shame !  
No:—let her pass, and, charioted along  
In guilty splendour, shake the public ways ;  
The frequency of crimes has wash'd them white,  
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch,  
Whom matrons now of character unsmirch'd  
And chaste themselves, are not asham'd to own.  
Virtue and vice had bound'ries in old time,  
Not to be pass'd : and she that had renounced  
Her sex's honour, was renounc'd herself  
By all that priz'd it ; not for prud'ry's sake  
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.  
'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif,  
Desirous to return and not receiv'd :  
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,  
And taught th' unb. emish'd to preserve with care  
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.  
Men too were nice in honour in those days,  
And judg'd offenders well. Then he that  
sharp'd,  
And pocketed a prize by fraud obtain'd,  
Was mark'd and shunn'd as odious. He that  
sold  
His country, or was slack when she requir'd  
His ev'ry nerve in action and at stretch,  
Paid with the blood that he had basely spar'd  
The price of his default. But now—yes, now  
We are become so candid and so fair  
So lib'ral in construction, and so rich  
In christian charity, (good natur'd age !)

That they are safe ; sinners of either sex  
Transgress what laws they may. Well dress'd,  
    well bred,  
Well equipag'd, is ticket good enough,  
To pass as readily through ev'ry door.  
Hypocrisy, detest her as we may,  
(And no man's hatred ever wrong'd her yet,)  
May claim this merit still—that she admits  
The worth of what she mimics, with such care,  
And thus gives virtue indirect applause ;  
But she has burnt her mask, not needed here,  
Where vice has such allowance, that her shifts  
And specious semblances have lost their use.

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd  
Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd  
My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew  
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
There was I found by one who had himself  
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,  
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.  
With gentle force soliciting the darts,  
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me  
    live.

Since then, with few associates, in remote  
And silent woods I wander, far from those  
My former partners of the peopled scene ;  
With few associates, and not wishing more.  
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,  
With other views of men and manners now  
Than once, and others of a life to come  
I see that all are wand'ers, gone astray  
Each in his own delusions ; they are lost

In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd  
And never won. Dream after dream ensues ;  
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,  
And still are disappointed. Rings the world  
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind  
And add two thirds of the remaining half,  
And find the total of their hopes and fears  
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as  
gay,

As if created only like the fly,  
That spreads his motly wings in th' eye of noon,  
To sport their season, and be seen no more.  
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,  
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.  
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats  
Of heroes little known ; and call the rant  
A history : describe the man, of whom  
His own coevals took but little note  
And paint his person, character, and views,  
As they had known him from his mother's  
womb.

They disentangle from the puzzled skein,  
In which obscurity has wrapp'd them up,  
The threads of politic and shrewd design,  
That ran through all his purposes, and charge  
His mind with meanings that he never had,  
Or, having, kept conceal'd. Some drill and  
bore

The solid earth, and from the strata there  
Extract a register, by which we learn,  
That he who made it and reveal'd its date  
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.

Some, more acute, and more industrious still,  
Contrive creation ; travel nature up  
To the sharp peak of her sublimist height,  
And tell us whence the stars : why some are  
fix'd,

And planetary some ; what gave them first  
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light.  
Great contest follows, and much learned dust,  
Involves the combatants ; each claiming truth,  
And truth disclaiming both. And thus they  
spend

The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp  
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws  
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.  
Is't not a pity now, that tickling rheums  
Should ever tease the lungs, and blear the sight  
Of oracles like these ? Great pity, too,  
That having wielded th' elements, and built  
A thousand systems, each in his own way,  
They should go out in fume, and be forgot.  
Ah ! what is life thus spent ? and what are they  
But frantic, who thus spend it ? all for smoke—  
Eternity for bubbles, proves at last  
A senseless bargain. When I see such games  
Play'd by the creatures of a pow'r who swears  
That he will judge the Earth, and call the fool  
To a sharp reck'ning, that has liv'd in vain ;  
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,  
And prove it in th' infallible result  
So hollow and so false—I feel my heart  
Dissolve in pity, and account the learn'd,  
If this be learning, most of all deceiv'd.

Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps,  
While thoughtful man is plausibly amused.  
Defend me, therefore, common sense, say I,  
From reveries so airy, from the toil  
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up !

'Twere well, says one, sage, erudite, profound,  
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,  
And overbuilt with most impending brows,  
'Twere well, could you permit the World to live  
As the World pleases : what's the World to you ?

Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk  
As sweet as charity from human breasts.  
I think, articulate—I laugh and weep,  
And exercise all functions of a man.  
How then should I and any man that lives  
Be strangers to each other ? Pierce my vein,  
Take of the crimson stream meand'ring there,  
And catechise it well : apply thy glass,  
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood  
Congenial with thine own : and, if it be,  
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose  
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,  
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which  
One common Maker bound me to the kind ?  
True ; I am no proficient, I confess,  
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift  
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,  
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath ;

I cannot analyze the air, nor catch  
The parallax of yonder luminous point,  
That seems half quench'd in the immense  
abyss:

Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest  
A silent witness of the headlong rage,  
Or heedless folly, by which thousands die,  
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.

God never meant that man should scale the  
Heav'ns

By strides of human wisdom. In his works,  
Though wondrous, he commands us in his word  
To seek *him* rather where his mercy shines.

The mind, indeed, enlighten'd from above,  
Views him in all; ascribes to the grand cause  
The grand effect; acknowledges with joy  
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.

But never yet did philosophic tube,  
That brings the planets home into the eye  
Of observation, and discovers, else  
Not visible, his family of worlds.

Discover him that rules them; such a veil  
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,  
And dark in things divine. Full often too,

Our wayward intellect, the more we learn  
Of nature, overlooks her author more;  
From instrumental causes proud to draw  
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake.

But if his word once teach us—shoot a ray  
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and  
reveal

Truths undiscern'd but by that holy light;

Then all is plain. Philosophy, baptiz'd  
In the pure fountain of eternal love,  
Has eyes indeed ; and viewing all she sees  
As meant to indicate a God to man,  
Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.  
Learning has borne such fruit in other days  
On all her branches : piety has found  
Friends in the friends of science, and true pray'r  
Has flow'd from lips wet with Castalian dew.  
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage !  
Sagacious reader of the works of God,  
And in his word sagacious. Such, too, thine,  
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,  
And fed on manna ! And such thine, in whom  
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,  
Immortal Hale ! for deep discernment prais'd,  
And sound integrity, not more than fam'd  
For sanctity of manners undefil'd.

All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades  
Like the fair flow'r dishevell'd in the wind ;  
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream,  
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,  
And we that worship him, ignoble graves.  
Nothing is proof against the gen'ral curse  
Of vanity that seizes all below.  
The only amaranthine flow'r on earth  
Is virtue ; th' only lasting treasure, truth.  
But what is truth ? 'Twas Pilate's question put  
To Truth itself, that deign'd him no reply.  
And wherefore ? will not God impart his light  
To them that ask it ?—Freely—'tis his joy,  
His glory, and his nature, to impart.

But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,  
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.  
What's that which brings contempt upon a book,  
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,  
The method clear, and argument exact :  
That makes a minister in holy things  
The joy of many, and the dread of more.  
His name a theme for praise and for reproach?—  
That, while it gives us worth in God's account,  
Depreciates and undoes us in our own?  
What pearl is it, that rich men cannot buy,  
That learning is too proud to gather up;  
But which the poor, and the despis'd of all,  
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought;  
Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth.

O friendly to the best pursuits of man,  
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace!  
Domestic life in rural leisure pass'd!  
Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets;  
Though many boast thy favours, and affect  
To understand and choose thee for their own.  
But foolish man foregoes his proper bliss,  
E'en as his first progenitor, and quits,  
Though plac'd in Paradise, (for earth has still,  
Some traces of her youthful beauty left)  
Substantial happiness for transient joy:  
Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse  
The growing seeds of wisdom; that suggest  
By ev'ry pleasing image they present,  
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,  
Compose the passions, and exalt the mind;  
Scenes such as these 'tis his supreme delight

To fill with riot, and defile with blood.  
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes  
We persecute, annihilate the tribes  
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale,  
Fearless and wrapt away from all his cares;  
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,  
Nor baited hook deceive the fish's eye;  
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,  
Be quell'd in all our summer-months' retreats;  
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,  
Who dream they have a taste for fields and  
groves,  
Would find them hideous nurs'ries of the spleen,  
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!  
They love the country, and none else, who seek,  
For their own sake, its silence and its shade.  
Delights which who would leave that has a heart  
Susceptible of pity, or a mind  
Cultur'd and capable of sober thought  
For all the savage din of the swift pack  
And clamours of the field?—Detested sport,  
That owes its pleasures to another's pain;  
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks  
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endued  
With eloquence, that agonies inspire,  
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs?  
Vain tears, alas, and sighs that never find  
A corresponding tone in jovial souls!  
Well—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare  
Has never heard the sanguinary yell  
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.  
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,

Whom ten long years' experience of my care  
Has made at last familiar: she has lost  
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,  
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.  
Ycs—thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand  
That feeds thee; thou mayst frolic on the floor  
At ev'ning, and at night retire secure  
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd,  
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledg'd  
All that is human in me, to protect  
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.  
If I survive thee, I will dig thy grave;  
And, when I place thee in it, sighing say,  
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.\*

How various his employments, whom the world  
Calls idle; and who justly in return  
Esteems that busy world an idler too!  
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,  
Delightful industry enjoy'd at home,  
And nature in her cultivated trim  
Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad—  
Can he want occupation who has these?  
Will he be idle who has much t' enjoy?  
Me therefore studious of laborious ease,  
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time,  
Not waste it, and aware that human life  
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,  
When He shall call his debtors to account,  
From whom are all our blessings, business finds  
E'en here: while sedulous I seek t' improve,

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\* See the note at the end.

At least neglect not, or leave unemploy'd,  
The mind he gave me ; driving it, though slack  
Too oft, and much impeded in its work  
By causes not to be divulg'd in vain,  
To its just point—the service of mankind.  
He that attends to his interior self,  
That has a heart, and keeps it : has a mind  
That hungers and supplies it ; and who seeks  
A social, not a dissipated life,  
Has business ; feels himself engag'd to achieve  
No unimportant, though a silent task.  
A life all turbulence and noise may seem  
To him that leads it wise, and to be prais'd ;  
But wisdom is a pearl with most success  
Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies :  
He that is ever occupied in storms,  
Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,  
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.

The morning finds the self-sequester'd man  
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.  
Whether inclement seasons recommend  
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys  
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart  
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph,  
Which neatly she prepares : then to his book  
Well chosen, and not sullenly perus'd  
In selfish silence, but imparted, oft  
As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,  
Or turn to nourishment, digested well,  
Or if the garden with its many cares,  
All well repaid, demand him, he attends  
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand

Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye,  
Oft loit'ring lazy, if not o'erseen,  
Or misapplying his unskilful strength.  
Nor does he govern only, or direct,  
But much performs himself. No works indeed,  
That ask robust, tough sinews bred to toil,  
Servile employ ; but such as may amuse,  
Nor tire, demanding rather skill than force.  
Proud of his well-spread walls he views his  
trees,

That meet, no barren interval between,  
With pleasure more than e'en their fruits afford ;  
Which, save himself who trains them, none can  
feel.

These therefore are his own peculiar charge ;  
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots.  
None but his steel approach them. What is  
weak,

Distemper'd, or has lost prolific pow'rs,  
Impair'd by age, his unrelenting hand  
Dooms to the knife : nor does he spare the soft  
And succulent, that feeds its giant growth,  
But barren, at th' expense of neighb'ring twigs  
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick  
With hopeful gems. 'The rest, no portion left  
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint  
Large expectation, he disposes neat  
At measur'd distances, that air and sun,  
Admitted freely may afford their aid,  
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.  
Hence summer has her riches, Autumn hence,  
And hence e'en Winter fills his wither'd hand

With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own.\*  
Fair recompense of labour well bestow'd,  
And wise precaution ; which a clime so rude  
Makes needful still, whose Spring is but the child  
Of churlish Winter, in her froward moods  
Discov'ring much the temper of her sire.  
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild  
Maternal nature had revers'd its course,  
She brings her infants forth with many smiles ;  
But once deliver'd, kills them with a frown.  
He therefore, timely warn'd, himself supplies  
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm  
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may  
sweep

His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft  
As the sun peeps, and vernal airs breathe mild,  
The fence withdrawn, he gives them ev'ry  
beam,

And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.

To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,  
So grateful to the palate, and when rare  
So coveted, else base and disesteem'd—  
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art  
That toiling ages have but just matur'd,  
And at this moment unessay'd in song.

Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long  
since,

Their eulogy ; those sang the Mantuan bard,  
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains ;  
And in thy numbers, Philips, shines for aye

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\* *Miraturque novus fructus et non sua poma. Virg.*

The solitary shilling. Pardon, then,  
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame,  
Th' ambition of one meaner far, whose pow'rs,  
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,  
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste  
Of critic appetite, no sordid fare,  
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.

The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,  
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,  
And potent to resist the freezing blast :  
For ere the beach and elm have cast their leaf  
Decidious, when now November dark  
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant  
Expos'd to his cold breath, the task begins.  
Warily, therefore, and with prudent heed,  
He seeks a favour'd spot ; that where he builds  
Th' agglomerated pile his frame may front  
The sun's meridian disk, and at the back  
Enjoy close shelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge  
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread  
Dry fern or litter'd hay, that may imbibe  
Th' ascending damps ; then leisurely impose,  
And lightly shaking it with agile hand  
From the full fork, the saturated straw.  
What longest binds the closest forms secure  
The shapely side that as it rises takes,  
By just degrees, an overhanging breath,  
Shelt'ring the base with its projected eaves ;  
Th' uplifted frame, compact at ev'ry joint,  
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,  
He settles next upon the sloping mount,  
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure

From the dash'd pane the deluge as it falls.  
He shuts it close, and the first labour ends.  
'Thrice must the voluble and restless Earth  
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,  
Slow gath'ring in the midst, through the square  
mass

Diffus'd, attain the surface; when, behold!  
A pestilent and most corrosive stream,  
Like a gross fog Bœotian, rising fast,  
And fast condens'd upon the dewy sash,  
Asks egress? which obtain'd, the overcharg'd  
And drench'd conservatory breathes abroad,  
In volumes wheeling slow the vapour dank;  
And, purified, rejoices to have lost  
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage  
Th' impatient fervour, which it first conceives  
Within its reeking bosom, threat'ning death  
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.  
Experience, slow preceptress, teaching oft  
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,  
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch  
Th' auspicious moment, when the temper'd heat,  
Friendly to vital motion, may afford  
Soft fomentation, and invite the seed.  
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,  
And glossy, he commits to pots of size  
Diminutive, well-fill'd with well-prepar'd  
And fruitful soil, that has been treasur'd long,  
And drank no moisture from the dripping clouds.  
These on the warm and genial earth that hides  
The smoking manure, and o'erspreads it all,  
He places lightly, and, as time subdues

The rage of fermentation, plunges deep  
In the soft medium, till they stand immers'd.  
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick  
And spreading wide their spongy lobes ; at first  
Pale, wan, and livid ; but assuming soon,  
If fann'd by balmy and nutritious air,  
Strain'd through the friendly mats, a vivid green.  
Two leaves produc'd, two rough indented leaves,  
Cautious he pinches from the second stalk  
A pimple that portends a future sprout,  
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight  
succeed

The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish ;  
Prolific all, and harbingers of more.  
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,  
And transplantation in an ampler space.  
Indulg'd in what they wish, they soon supply  
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flow'rs,  
Blown on the summit of the apparent fruit.  
These have their sexes ; and when summer  
shines

The bee transports the fertilizing meal  
From flow'r to flow'r, and e'en the breathing air  
Wafts the rich-prize to its appointed use.  
Not so when winter scowls. Assistant Art  
Then acts in Nature's office, brings to pass  
The glad espousals, and ensures the crop.

Grudge not, ye rich, (since Luxury must have  
His dainties, and the World's more num'rous half  
Lives by contriving delicates for you,)  
Grudge not the cost. Ye little know the cares  
The vigilance, the labour, and the skill,

That day and night are exercis'd, and hang  
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,  
That ye may garnish your profuse regales  
With summer fruits brought forth by wintry  
suns.

Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart  
The process. Heat, and cold, and wind, and  
steam,  
Moisture and drought, mice, worms, and  
swarming flies,

Minute as dust, and numberless, oft work  
Dire disappointment, that admits no cure,  
And which no care can obviate. It were long,  
Too long, to tell th' expedients and the shifts,  
Which he that fights a season so severe  
Devises while he guards his tender trust;  
And oft at last in vain. The learn'd and wise  
Sarcastic would exclaim, and judge the song  
Cold as its theme, and like its theme the fruit  
Of too much labour, worthless when produc'd.

Who loves a garden loves a green-house too.  
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,  
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,  
While the winds whistle and the snows descend  
The spiry myrtle with unwith'ring leaf  
Shines there, and flourishes. The golden boast  
Of Portugal and western India there,  
The ruddier orange, and the paler lime,  
Peep through their polish'd foliage at the storm,  
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.  
The amomum there with intermingling flow'rs  
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boasts

Her crimson honours ; and the spangled beau,  
Ficoides glitters bright the winter long.  
All plants of ev'ry leaf, that can endure  
The winter's frown, if screen'd from his shrewd  
bite,

Live there, and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,  
Levantine regions these ; th' Azores send  
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote  
Caffraria : foreigners from many lands,  
They form one social shade, as if conven'd  
By magic summons of th' Orphean lyre.  
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass  
But by a master's hand, disposing well  
The gay diversities of leaf and flow'r,  
Must lend its aid t' illustrate all their charms,  
And dress the regular yet various scene.  
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van  
The dwarfish, in the rear retir'd, but still  
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand.  
So once were rang'd the sons of ancient Rome,  
A noble show ! while Roscius trod the stage ;  
And so, while Garrick, as renown'd as he,  
The sons of Albion ; fearing each to lose  
Some note of Nature's music from his lips,  
And covetous of Shakspeare's beauty, seen  
In ev'ry flash of his far-beaming eye,  
Nor taste alone and well-contriv'd display  
Suffice to give the marshall'd ranks the grace  
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains  
Unsung, and many cares are yet behind,  
And more laborious ; cares on which depend  
Their vigour, injur'd soon, not soon restor'd.

The soil must be renew'd, which often wash'd  
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,  
And disappoints the roots ; the slender roots  
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase,  
Must smooth be shorn away ; the sapless branch,  
Must fly before the knife ; the wither'd leaf  
Must be detach'd, and where it strews the floor  
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else  
Contagion and disseminating death.

Discharge but these kind offices, (and who  
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)  
Well they repay the toil. The sight is pleased,  
The scent regal'd, each odorif'rous leaf,  
Each op'ning blossom, freely breathes abroad  
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.

So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,  
All healthful, are th' employs of rural life.  
Reiterated as the wheel of time  
Runs round ; still ending, and beginning still.  
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll  
That softly swell'd and gaily dress'd appears  
A flow'ry island, from the dark green lawn  
Emerging, must be deem'd a labour due  
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.  
Here also grateful mixture of well-match'd  
And sorted hues, (each giving each relief,  
And by contrasted beauty shining more,)  
Is needful. Strength may wield the pond'rous  
spade,  
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home ;  
But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,  
And most attractive, is the fair result

Of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind.  
Without it all is Gothic as the scene  
To which th' insipid citizen resorts  
Near yonder heath ; where industry mispent,  
But proud of his uncouth, ill-chosen task,  
Has made a Heav'n on Earth ; with suns and  
moons

Of close-ramm'd stones has charg'd th' encum-  
ber'd soil,

And fairly laid the zodiac in the dust.

He, therefore, who would see his flow'rs dispos'd  
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives  
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,  
Forecasts the future whole ; that, when the  
scene

Shall break into its preconceiv'd display,  
Each for itself, and all as with one voice  
Conspiring, may attest his bright design,  
Nor even then dismissing as perform'd,  
His pleasant work, may he suppose it done.

Few self-supported flow'rs endure the wind  
Uninjur'd, but expect the upholding aid  
Of the smooth shaven prop, and, neatly tied,  
Are wedded thus, like beauty to old age,  
For int'rest sake, the living to the dead.

Some clothe the soil that feeds them, far diffus'd  
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,  
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen  
Some more aspiring catch the neighbour shrub  
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,  
Else unadorn'd, with many a gay festoon  
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well

The strength they borrow with the grace they  
lend.

All hate the rank society of weeds,  
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust  
Th' improv'rish'd earth ; an overbearing race,  
That, like the multitude made faction mad,  
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.

O blest seclusion from a jarring world,  
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys ! Retreat  
Cannot indeed to guilty man restore  
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past ;  
But it has peace, and much secures the mind  
From all assaults of evil ; proving still  
A faithful barrier, not o'erleap'd with ease  
By vicious Custom, raging uncontroll'd  
Abroad, and desolating public life.  
When fierce Temptation, seconded within  
By traitor Appetite, and arm'd with darts  
Temper'd in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,  
To combat may be glorious, and success  
Perhaps may crown us ; but to fly is safe.  
Had I the choice of sublunary good,  
What could I wish, that I possess not here ?  
Health, leisure, means t' improve it, friendship,  
peace,

No loose or wanton, though a wand'ring muse.  
And constant occupation without care.  
Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss ;  
Hopeless, indeed, that dissipated minds,  
And profligate abusers of a world  
Created fair so much in vain for them,  
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,

Allur'd by my report : but sure no less  
That self-condemn'd they must neglect the prize,  
And what they will not taste must yet approve.  
What we admire we priase ; and when we praise  
Advance it into notice, that, its worth  
Acknowledg'd, others may admire it too.  
I therefore recommend, though at the risk  
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,  
The cause of piety and sacred truth,  
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd  
Should best secure them, and promote them  
most ;  
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive  
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoy'd.  
Pure is the nymph, though lib'ral of her smiles,  
And chaste, though unconfin'd, whom I extol.  
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he call'd,  
Vain-glorious of her charms, his Vashti forth,  
To grace the full pavilion. His design  
Was but to boast his own peculiar good,  
Which all might view with envy, none partake.  
My charmer is not mine alone ; my sweets,  
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,  
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form  
And lineaments divine I trace a hand  
That errs not, and find raptures still renew'd,  
Is free to all men—universal prize.  
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want  
Admirers, and be destin'd to divide  
With meaner objects e'en the few she finds !  
Stripp'd of her ornaments, her leaves and flow'rs,

She loses all her influence. Cities then  
Attract us, and neglected nature pines,  
Abandon'd as unworthy of our love.  
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfum'd  
By roses ; and clear suns, though scarcely felt ;  
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure  
From clamour, and whose very silence charms :  
To be preferr'd to smoke, to the eclipse,  
That metropolitan volcanoes make,  
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day  
long ;  
And to the stir of Commerce, driving slow,  
And thund'ring loud, with his ten thousand  
wheels ?  
They would be, were not madness in the head,  
And folly in the heart ; were England now,  
What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,  
And undebauch'd. But we have bid farewell  
To all the virtues of those better days,  
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once  
Knew their own masters ; and laborious hinds,  
Who had surviv'd the father, serv'd the son.  
Now, the legitimate and rightful lord  
Is but a transient guest, newly arriv'd,  
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw  
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf,  
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price  
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.  
Estates are landscapes, gaz'd upon a while,  
Then advertis'd, and auctioneer'd away.  
The country starves, and they that feed th'  
o'rcharg'd

And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,  
By a just judgment stript and starve themselves.  
The wings that waft our riches out of sight,  
Grow on the gamester's elbows, and the alert  
And nimble motion of those restless joints,  
That never tire, soon fans them all away.  
Improvement, too, the idol of the age,  
Is fed with many a victim. Lo, he comes!  
Th' omnipotent magician, Brown, appears!  
Down falls the venerable pile, th' abode  
Of our forefathers—a grave whisker'd race,  
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,  
But in a distant spot; where more expos'd  
It may enjoy th' advantage of the north,  
And aguish east, till time shall have transform'd  
Those naked acres to a shelt'ring grove.  
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn;  
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise:  
And streams, as if created for his use,  
Pursue the track of his directing wand.  
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,  
Now murm'ring soft, now roaring in cascades—  
E'en as he bids! The enraptur'd owner smiles.  
'Tis finish'd, and yet, finish'd as it seems  
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show,  
A mine to satisfy th' enormous cost.  
Drain'd to the last poor item of his wealth,  
He sighs, departs, and leaves th' accomplish'd plan  
That he has touch'd, retouch'd many a long day  
Labour'd, and many a night pursu'd in dreams,  
Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the  
Heav'n

He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy !  
And now perhaps the glorious hour is come,  
When, having no stake left, no pledge t' endear,  
Her int'rests, or that gives her sacred cause  
A moment's operation on his love,  
He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal  
To serve his country. Ministerial grace  
Deals him out money from the public chest ;  
Or, if that mine be shut, some private purse  
Supplies his need with a usurious loan,  
To be refunded duly, when his vote  
Well-manag'd shall have earn'd its worthy price.  
O innocent, compar'd with arts like these,  
Crape, and cock'd pistol, and the whistling ball  
Sent through the trav'ler's temples! He that finds  
One drop of Heav'n's sweet mercy in his cup,  
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content,  
So he may wrap himself in honest rags  
At his last gasp : but could not for a world  
Fish up his dirty and dependent bread  
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,  
Sordid and sick'ning at his own success.

Ambition, avarice, penury, incurr'd  
By endless riot, vanity, the lust  
Of pleasure and variety, despatch  
As duly as the swallows disappear,  
The world of wand'ring knights and squires to  
town.

London engulfs them all ! The shark is there,  
And the shark's prey ; the spendthrift, and the  
leech

That sucks him : there the sycophant, and he

Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows  
Begg a warm office, doom'd to a cold jail  
And groat per diem, if his patron frown,  
The levee swarms, as if in golden pomp  
Were character'd on ev'ry statesman's door,  
“ *Batter'd and bankrupt fortunes mended here.*”  
These are the charms that sully and eclipse  
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe,  
That lean, hard-handed Poverty inflicts,  
The hope of better things, the chance to win,  
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amus'd,  
That at the sound of Winter's hoary wing  
Unpeople all our countries of such herds  
Of flutt'ring, loit'ring, cringing, begging, loose,  
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast  
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.

O thou resort and mart of all the earth,  
Checker'd with all complexions of mankind,  
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see  
Much that I love, and more that I admire,  
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair,  
That pleasest and yet shockest me! I can laugh,  
And I can weep, can hope and can despond  
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee!  
Ten righteous would have sav'd a city once,  
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—  
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,  
And therefore more obnoxious, at this hour,  
Than Sodom in her day had pow'r to be,  
For whom God heard his Abr'ham plead in vain.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK IV.

### THE WINTER EVENING.

#### ARGUMENT OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

The post comes in—The newspaper is read—The World contemplated at a distance—Address to Winter—The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones—Address to evening—A brown study—Fall of snow in the evening—The wagoner—A poor family piece—The rural thief—Public houses—The multitude of them censured—The farmer's daughter: what she was,—what she is—The simplicity of country manners almost lost—Causes of the change—Desertion of the country by the rich—Neglect of the magistrates—The militia principally in fault—The new recruit and his transformation—Reflection on the bodies corporate—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.

HARK! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,  
That with its wearisome but needful length  
Bestrides the wintry flood; in which the moon  
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright:—  
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,  
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen  
locks,

News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.  
True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,  
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn;  
And having dropp'd th' expected bag, pass on.  
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch.  
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief  
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;  
To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.  
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,  
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet.  
With tears, that trickled down the writer's cheeks  
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,  
Or charg'd with am'rous sighs of absent swains,  
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect  
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.  
But O, th' important budget! usher'd in  
With such heart-shaking music, who can say  
What are its tidings? have our troops awak'd?  
Or do they still, as if with opium drugg'd,  
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?  
Is India free? and does she wear her plum'd  
And jewel'd turban with a smile of peace,  
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,  
The popular harangue, the tart reply,  
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,  
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;  
I burn to set th' imprisoned wranglers free,  
And give them voice and utt'rance once again.  
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn  
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,

That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
So let us welcome peaceful ev'ning in.  
Not such his ev'ning, who with shining face  
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and, squeeze'd  
And bor'd with elbow points through both his  
sides,

Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage :  
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,  
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath  
Of patriots, bursting with heroic rage,  
Or placemen, all tranquillity and smiles.  
This folio of four pages happy work !  
Which not e'en critics criticise ; that holds  
Inquisitive attention, while I read,  
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,  
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break ;  
What is it, but a map of busy life,  
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns ?  
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge,  
That tempts Ambition. On the summit see  
The seals of office glitter in his eyes ;  
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them ! At his heels,  
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,  
And with a dext'rous jerk soon twists him down,  
And wins them, but to loose them in his turn.  
Here rills of oily eloquence, in soft  
Meanders lubricate the course they take ;  
The modest speaker is asham'd and griev'd,  
T' engross a moment's notice ; and yet begs,  
Begg a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,  
However trivial, all that he conceives.  
Sweet bashfulness ; it claims at least this praise :  
The dearth of information and good sense

That it foretells us always comes to pass.  
Cataracts of declamation thunder here ;  
There forests of no meaning spread the page,  
In which all comprehension wanders, lost ;  
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there  
With merry descants on a nation's woes.  
The rest appears a wilderness of strange  
But gay confusion ; roses for the cheeks,  
And lilies for the brows of faded age,  
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,  
Heav'n, earth, and ocean, plundered of their  
sweets,

Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,  
Sermons, and city feasts, and fav'rite airs,  
Ætherial journeys, submarine exploits,  
And Katterfelto, with his hair on end  
At his own wonders, wond'ring for his bread.  
'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,  
To peep at such a world ; to see the stir  
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd ;  
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates  
At a safe distance, where the dying sound  
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjur'd ear.  
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease  
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanc'd  
To some secure and more than mortal height,  
That liberates and exempts me from them all.  
It turns submitted to my view, turns round  
With all its generations ; I behold  
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war  
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me ;  
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride  
And av'rice that make man a wolf to man ;

Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,  
By which he speaks the language of his heart,  
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.  
He travels and expatiates, as the bee  
From flow'r to flow'r, so he from land to land;  
The manners, customs, policy, of all  
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;  
He sucks intelligence in ev'ry clime,  
And spreads the honey of his deep research  
At his return—a rich repast for me.  
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,  
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes  
Discover countries; with a kindred heart  
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;  
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,  
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

O Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,  
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,  
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks  
Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows  
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp'd in clouds,  
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne  
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,  
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way,  
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,  
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun  
A pris'ner in the yet undawning east,  
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,  
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,  
Down to the rosy west: but kindly still  
Compensating his loss with added hours  
Of social converse and instructive ease,  
And gath'ring, at short notice, in one group

The family dispers'd, and fixing thought,  
Not less dispers'd by daylight and its cares.  
I crown thee king of intimate delights,  
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturb'd Retirement, and the hours  
Of long, uninterrupted ev'ning know.  
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates,  
No powder'd pert proficient in the art  
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors  
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds  
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the  
    sound,  
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake;  
But here the needle plies its busy task,  
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r,  
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,  
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,  
And curling tendrils, gracefully dispos'd,  
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;  
A wreath, that cannot fade, or flow'rs that blow  
With most success when all besides decay.  
The poet's or historian's page by one  
Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest:  
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet  
    sounds  
The touch from many a tembling chord shakes  
    out;  
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,  
And in the charming strife triumphant still,  
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge  
On female industry: the threaded steel  
Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.

The volume clos'd, the customary rites  
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal:  
Such as the mistress of the world once found  
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,  
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,  
And under an old oak's domestic shade,  
Enjoy'd, spare feast! a radish and an egg.  
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,  
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play  
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:  
Nor do we madly, like an impious World,  
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God  
That made them an intruder on their joys,  
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise  
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone  
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,  
While we retrace with Mem'ry's pointing wand,  
That calls the past to our exact review,  
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,  
The disappointed foe, deliv'rance found  
Unlook'd for, life preserv'd, and peace restor'd—  
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.

O ev'nings worthy of the gods! exclaim'd  
The Sabine bard. O ev'nings, I reply,  
More to be priz'd and coveted than yours,  
As more illumin'd, and with nobler truths,  
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy.

Is Winter hideous in a garb like this?  
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,  
The pent-up breath of an unsav'ry throng,  
To thaw him into feeling, or the smart  
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits  
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?

The self-complacent actor, when he views  
(Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)  
The slope of faces, from the floor to th' roof  
(As if one master spring controll'd them all,)  
Relax'd into a universal grin,  
Sees not a count'nance there, that speaks of joy  
Half so refin'd or so sincere as ours.

Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks  
That idleness has ever yet contriv'd  
To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,  
To palliate dulness, and give time a shove.  
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,  
Unsoil'd, and swift, and of a silken sound ;  
But the world's Time is Time in masquerade !  
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledg'd,  
With motley plumes ; and where the peacock  
shows

His azure eyes, is tinctur'd black and red  
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,  
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,  
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.  
What should be, and what was an hourglass once,  
Becomes a dicebox, and a billiard mace  
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.  
Thus deck'd, he charms a World whom Fashion  
blinds

To his true worth, most pleas'd when idle most :  
Whose only happy, are their idle hours.  
E'en misses, at whose age their mothers wore  
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress  
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school  
Of card devoted Time, and, night by night,  
Plac'd at some vacant corner of the board,

Learn ev'ry trick, and soon play all the game.  
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,  
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?  
As he that travels far oft turns aside,  
To view some rugged rock or mould'ring tow'r,  
Which seen, delights him not; then coming  
home,

Describes and prints it, that the world may know  
How far he went for what was nothing worth:  
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread,  
With colours mix'd for a far diff'rent use,  
Paint cards, and dolls, and ev'ry idle thing,  
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come, Ev'ning, once again, season of peace,  
Return, sweet Ev'ning, and continue long!  
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,  
With matron step slow-moving, while the Night  
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employ'd  
In letting fall the curtain of repose  
On bird and beast, the other charg'd for man  
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:  
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,  
Like homely-featur'd Night, of clust'ring gems;  
A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,  
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine  
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high  
With ostentatious pageantry, but set  
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,  
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.  
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,  
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift;  
And, whether I devote thy gentle hour,  
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;

To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit ;  
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,  
When they command whom man was born to  
    please ;

I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze  
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied  
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,  
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk  
Whole without stooping, tow'ring crest and all,  
My pleasures, too, begin. But me perhaps  
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile  
With faint illumination, that uplifts  
The shadows to the ceiling, there by fits  
Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame,  
Not undelightful is an hour to me  
So spent in parlour twilight : such a gloom  
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,  
The mind contemplative, with some new theme  
Pregnant, or indispos'd alike to all.  
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial  
    pow'rs,

That never feel a stupor, know no pause,  
Nor need one ; I am conscious, and confess  
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.  
Me oft has Fancy, ludicrous and wild,  
Sooth'd with a waking dream of houses, tow'rs,  
Trees, churches, and strange visages, express'd  
In the red cinders, while with poring eye  
I gaz'd, myself creating what I saw.  
Nor less amus'd have I quiescent watch'd  
The sooty films that play upon the bars  
Pendulous, and foreboding in the view

Of superstition prophesying still.

Though still deceiv'd, some stranger's near  
approach.

'Tis thus the understanding takes repose

In indolent vacuity of thought,

And sleeps, and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face

Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask

Of deep deliberation, as the man

Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and  
lost.

Thus oft, reclin'd at ease, I lose an hour

At ev'ning, till at length the freezing blast

That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home

The recollected pow'rs ; and snapping short

The glassy threads, with which the Fancy weaves

Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.

How calm is my recess ; and how the frost,

Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear

The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within !

I saw the woods and fields at close of day,

A variegated show ; the meadows green,

Though faded ; and the lands, where lately wav'd

'The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,

Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share.

I saw far off the weedy fallows smile

With verdure not unprofitable, graz'd

By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each

His fav'rite herb : while all the leafless groves

That skirt th' horizon wore a sable hue,

Scarce notic'd in the kindred dusk of eve.

To-morrow brings a change, a total change !

Which even now, though silently perform'd,

And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face  
Of universal nature undergoes.  
Fast falls a fleecy show'r ; the downy flakes  
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse,  
Soft alighting upon all below,  
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives  
Gladly the thick'ning mantle ; and the green  
And tender blade, that fear'd the chilling blast,  
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.

In such a world, so thorny, and where none  
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,  
Without some thistly sorrow at its side ;  
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin  
Against the law of love, to measure lots  
With less distinguish'd than ourselves ; that thus  
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,  
And sympathize with others suff'ring more.  
Ill fares the trav'ler now, and he that stalks  
In pond'rous boots beside his reeking team.  
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore  
By congregated loads adhering close  
To the clogg'd wheels ; and in its sluggish pace  
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.  
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,  
While ev'ry breath, by respiration strong  
Forc'd downward, is consolidated soon  
Upon their jutting chests. He, form'd to bear  
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,  
With half shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks and  
teeth  
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.  
One hand secures his hat, save when with both

He brandishes his pliant length of whip,  
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.  
O happy ; and in my account denied  
That sensibility of pain with which  
Refinement is endur'd, thrice happy thou !  
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed  
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.  
The learn'd finger never need explore  
Thy vig'rous pulse ; and the unhealthful east,  
That breathes the spleen, and searches ev'ry  
bone

Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.  
Thy days roll on exempt from household care ;  
Thy wagon is thy wife ; and the poor beasts,  
That drag the dull companion to and fro,  
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.  
Ah, treat them kindly ; rude as thou appear'st,  
Yet show that thou hast mercy ! which the great,  
With needless hurry whirl'd from place to place,  
Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,  
Such claim compassion in a night like this,  
And have a friend in ev'ry feeling heart.  
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labour, all day long  
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,  
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.  
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights  
Her scanty stock of brushwood blazing clear,  
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.  
The few small embers left she nurses well ;  
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands  
And crowded knees, sit cow'ring o'er the sparks,  
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.

The man feels least, as more inur'd than she  
To winter, and the current in his veins  
More briskly mov'd by his severer toil ;  
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.  
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw  
Dangled along at the cold finger's end  
Just when the day declin'd : and the brown loaf  
Lodg'd on the shelf half eaten without sauce  
Of sav'ry cheese, or butter, costlier still ;  
Sleep seems their only refuge : for, alas !  
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,  
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few !  
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care,  
Ingenious Parsimony takes, but just —  
Saves the small inventory, bed, and stool,  
Skillet, and old carv'd chest, from public sale.  
They live, and live without extorted alms  
From grudging hands : but other boast have  
none,  
To sooth their honest pride, that scorns to beg,  
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.  
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,  
For ye are worthy ; choosing rather far  
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,  
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure  
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs  
Of knaves in office, partial in the work  
Of distribution ; lib'ral of their aid  
To clam'rous Importunity in rags,  
But ofttimes deaf to suppliants, who would blush  
To wear a tatter'd garb, however coarse,  
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth :  
These ask with painful shyness, and, refus'd

Because deserving, silently retire !  
But be ye of good courage ! Time itself  
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give  
increase ;

And all your numerous progeny, well train'd,  
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,  
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want  
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,  
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.  
I mean the man, who, when the distant poor  
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty with most, who whimper forth  
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted wo ;  
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.  
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad  
For plunder ; much solicitous how best  
He may compensate for a day of sloth  
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.  
Wo to the gard'ners pale, the farmer's hedge,  
Plash'd neatly, and secur'd with driven stakes  
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,  
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame  
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil.  
An ass's burden, and, when laden most  
And heaviest, light of foot, steals fast away.  
Nor does the bordered hovel better guard  
The well-stack'd pile of riven logs and roots  
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave  
Unwrench'd the door, however well secur'd,  
Where Canticleer amidst his haram sleeps  
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitch'd from the perch,  
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,

To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,  
And loudly wond'ring at the sudden change.  
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse  
Did pity of their suff'rings warp aside  
His principle, and tempt him into sin  
For their support, so destitute. But they  
Neglected, pine at home ; themselves, as more  
Expos'd than others, with less scruple made  
His victims, robb'd of their defenceless all.  
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst  
Of ruinous ebriety, that prompts  
His ev'ry action, and imbrutes the man.  
O for a law to noose the villain's neck  
Who starves his own ; who persecutes the blood  
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates  
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love !

Pass where we may, through city or through  
town,  
Village or hamlet, of this merry land,  
Though lean and beggar'd, every twentieth pace,  
Conducts th' unguarded nose to such a whiff  
Of stale debauch, forth-issuing from the sties  
That law has licens'd, as makes Temp'rance reel.  
There sit, involv'd and lost in curling clouds  
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,  
The lackey, and the groom ; the craftsman there  
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil ;  
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,  
And he that kneads the dough ; all loud alike,  
All learned and all drunk ! the fiddle screams  
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wail'd  
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard,

Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,  
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,  
Perch'd on the signpost, holds with even hand  
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays  
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;  
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.  
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound,  
The cheek distending oath, not to be prais'd  
As ornamental, musical, polite,  
Like those which modern senators employ,  
Whose oath is rhet'ric, and who swear for fame!  
Behold the schools, in which plebeian minds,  
Once simple, are initiated in arts  
Which some may practise with politer grace,  
But none with readier skill!—'Tis here they  
learn

The road that leads from competence and peace  
To indigence and rapine; till at last  
Society, grown weary of the load,  
Shakes her encumber'd lap, and casts them out.  
But censure profits little; vain th' attempt  
To advertise in verse a public pest,  
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds  
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.  
Th' excise is fatten'd with the rich result  
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,  
For ever dribbling out their base contents,  
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the state,  
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.  
Drink, and be mad then; 'tis your country bids!  
Gloriously drunk, obey th' important call!  
Her cause demands th' assistance of your throats;

Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fall'n upon those happier days  
That poets celebrate : those golden times,  
And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,  
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.  
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts  
That felt their virtues : Innocence, it seems,  
From courts dismiss'd, found shelter in the groves;  
The footsteps of simplicity, impress'd  
Upon the yielding herbage, (so they sing.)  
Then were not all effac'd ; then speech profane,  
And manners profligate, were rarely found,  
Observ'd as prodigies, and soon reclaim'd.  
Vain wish ! those days were never ; airy dreams  
Sat for the picture : and the poet's hand,  
Imparting substance to an empty shade,  
Impos'd a gay delirium for a truth.  
Grant it : I still must envy them an age  
That favour'd such a dream : in days like these  
Impossible when Virtue is so scarce,  
That to suppose a scene where she presides  
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.  
No : we are polish'd now. The rural lass,  
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,  
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,  
So dignified, that she was hardly less  
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,  
Is seen no more. The character is lost !  
Her head, adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft,  
And ribands streaming gay, superbly rais'd,  
And magnified beyond all human size,  
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand

For more than half the tresses it sustains :  
Her elbows ruffled, and her tott'ring form  
Ill propp'd upon French heels; she might be  
deem'd

(But that the basket dangling on her arm  
Interprets her more truly) of a rank  
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs—  
Expect her soon with footboy at her heels,  
No longer blushing for her awkward load,  
Her train and her umbrella all her care !

The town has ting'd the country ; and the stain  
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,  
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs  
Down into scenes still rural ; but, alas,  
Scenes rarely grac'd with rural manners now !  
Time was when in the pastoral retreat  
Th' unguarded door was safe ; men did not watch  
T' invade another's right, or guard their own.  
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscar'd  
By drunken howlings ; and the chilling tale  
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard  
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.  
But farewell now to unsuspecting nights,  
And slumbers unalarm'd ! Now, ere you sleep,  
See that your polish'd arms be prim'd with care,  
And drop the night-bolt ;—ruffians are abroad ;  
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat  
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear  
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.  
E'en daylight has its dangers ; and the walk  
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconcious  
once

Of other tenants than melodious birds,  
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.  
Lamented change ! to which full many a cause  
Invet'rate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.  
The course of human things from good to ill,  
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.  
Increase of pow'r begets increase of wealth ;  
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess ;  
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague,  
That seizes first the opulent, descends  
To the next rank contagious, and in time,  
Taints downward all the graduated scale  
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.  
The rich, and they that have an arm to check  
The license of the lowest in degree,  
Desert their office ; and themselves, intent  
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus  
To all the violence of lawless hands  
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.  
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,  
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.  
The plump convivial parson often bears  
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays  
His rev'rence and his worship both to rest  
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.  
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm ;  
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,  
Himself enslav'd by terror of the band—  
Th' audacious convict whom he dares not bind.  
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,  
He, too, may have his vice, and sometimes prove  
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside

In lucrative concerns. Examine well  
His milk-white hand ; the palm is hardly clean—  
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.  
Foh ! 'twas a bribe that left it : he has touch'd  
Corruption. Whoso seeks an audit here  
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,  
Wild fowl or venison : and his errand speeds.

But faster far, and more than all the rest,  
A noble cause, which none, who bears a spark  
Of public virtue, ever wish'd remov'd,  
Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect.  
'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd  
The heart of merit in the meaner class.  
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage  
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,  
Seem most at variance with all moral good,  
And incompatible with serious thought.  
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,  
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all  
But his own simple pleasures ; now and then,  
A wréstling match, a foot-race, or a fair ;  
Is balloted, and trembles at the news :  
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears  
A bible oath to be whate'er they please,  
To do he knows not what. The task perform'd,  
That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,  
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.  
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,  
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,  
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,  
Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,  
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,

Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well :  
He stands erect : his slouch becomes a walk ;  
He steps right onward, martial in his air,  
His form and movement ; is as smart above  
As meal and larded locks can make him ; wears  
His hat, or his plum'd helmet, with a grace ;  
And, his three years of heroship expir'd,  
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.  
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum  
Attends him ; drives his cattle to a march ;  
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.  
'Twere well if his exterior change were all—  
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost  
His ignorance and harmless manners too.  
To swear, to game, to drink ; to show at home  
By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath breach,  
The great proficiency he made abroad ;  
T' astonish, and to grieve his gazing friends ;  
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart :  
To be a pest where he was useful once ;  
Are his sole aim, and all his glory, now.

Man in society is like a flow'r  
Blown in its native bed ; 'tis there alone  
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,  
Shine out ; there only reach their proper use.  
But man, associated and leagued with man  
By regal warrant or self-joined by bond  
For int'rest sake, or swarming into clans  
Beneath one head for purposes of war,  
Like flow'rs selected from the rest, and bound  
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,  
Fades rapidly, and, by compression marr'd,

Contracts defilement not to be endur'd.  
Hence charter'd boroughs are such public plagues;  
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps  
In all their private functions, once combin'd,  
Become a loathsome body, only fit  
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.  
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin  
Against the charities of domestic life,  
Incorporated, seem at once to lose  
Their nature; and, disclaiming all regard  
For mercy and the common rights of man,  
Build factories with blood, conducting trade  
At the sword's point, and dying the white robe  
Of innocent commercial Justice red.  
Hence, too, the field of glory, as the world  
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,  
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,  
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,  
Is but a school, where thoughtlessness is taught  
On principle, where foppery atones  
For folly, gallantry for every vice.

But slighted as it is, and by the great  
Abandon'd, and, which still I more regret,  
Infected with the manners and the modes  
It knew not once, the country wins me still.  
I never fram'd a wish, or form'd a plan,  
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,  
But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd  
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice  
Had found me, or the hope of being free.  
My very dreams were rural; rural too  
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,

Sportive and jingling her poetic bells,  
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their pow'rs.  
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tun'd  
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats  
Fatigu'd me, never weary of the pipe  
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,  
The rustic throng beneath his fav'rite beech.  
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms :  
New to my taste, his Paradise surpass'd  
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue  
To speak its excellence. I danc'd for joy.  
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age  
As twice seven years, his beauties had then  
first

Engag'd my wonder ; and admiring still,  
And still admiring, with regret suppos'd  
The joy half lost, because not sooner found.  
There, too, enamour'd of the life I lov'd,  
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit  
Determin'd and possessing it at last,  
With transports such as favour'd lovers feel,  
I studied, priz'd, and wish'd that I had known,  
Ingenious Cowley ! and, though now reclaim'd  
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,  
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit  
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.  
I still revere thee, courtly though retir'd ;  
Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent  
bow'rs,

Not unemploy'd ; and finding rich amends  
For a lost world in solitude and verse.  
Tis born with all : The love of Nature's works

Is an ingredient in the compound man,  
Infus'd at the creation of the kind.  
And, though th' Almighty Maker has throughout  
Discriminated, each from each, by strokes  
And touches of his hand, with so much art  
Diversified, that two were never found  
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,  
That all discern a beauty in his works,  
And all can taste them: minds that have been  
    form'd  
And tutor'd with a relish more exact,  
But none without some relish, none unmov'd.  
It is a flame that dies not even there,  
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,  
Nor habits of luxurious city life,  
Whatever else they smother of true worth  
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.  
The villas, with which London stands begirt,  
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads  
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,  
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer  
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!  
E'en in the stifling bosom of the town  
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms  
That sooth the rich possessor; much consol'd,  
That here and there some sprigs of mournful  
    mint,  
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well  
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint  
That nature lives; that sight-refreshing green  
Is still the liv'ry she delights to wear,  
Though sickly samples of the exhub'rant whole.

What are the casements lin'd with creeping  
herbs,  
The prouder sashes fronted with a range  
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,  
The Frenchman's darling?\* are they not all  
proofs,  
That man, immur'd in cities, still retains  
His inborn inextinguishable thirst  
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss  
By supplemental shifts, the best he may?  
The most unfurnish'd with the means of life,  
And they, that never pass their brick-wall  
bounds,  
To range the fields, and treat their lungs with  
air,  
Yet feel the burning instinct; over head  
Suspend their crazy boxes planted thick,  
And water'd duly. There the pitcher stands  
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;  
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets  
The country, with what ardour he contrives  
A peep at Nature, when he can no more.  
Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease,  
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys,  
And harmless pleasures in the throng'd abode  
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!  
Address himself who will to the pursuit  
Of honours, or emoluments, or fame;  
I shall not add myself to such a chase,  
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.

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\* Mignonette.

Some must be great. Great offices will have  
Great talents. And God gives to ev'ry man  
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,  
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall  
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.  
To the deliv'rer of an injur'd land  
He gives a tongue t' enlarge upon a heart  
To feel, and courage to redress his wrongs ;  
To monarchs dignity ; to judges sense ;  
To artists ingenuity and skill ;  
To me, an unambitious mind, content  
In the low vale of life, that early felt  
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long  
Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK V.

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### THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

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#### ARGUMENT OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

A frosty morning—The foddering of cattle—The woodman and his dog—The poultry—Whimsical effects of a frost at a waterfall—The empress of Russia's palace of ice—Amusements of monarchs—War, one of them—Wars, whence—And whence monarchy—The evils of it—English and French loyalty contrasted—The Bastile, and a prisoner there—Liberty the chief recommendation of this country—Modern patriotism questionable, and why—The perishable nature of the best human institutions—Spiritual liberty not perishable—The slavish state of man by nature—Deliver him, Deist, if you can—Grace must do it—The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated—Their different treatment—Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free—His relish of the works of God—Address to the Creator.

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'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb  
Ascending, fires th' horizon; while the clouds  
That crowd away before the driving wind,  
More ardent as the disk emerges more,

Resemble most some city in a blaze,  
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting  
ray  
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,  
And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,  
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry spiry blade  
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.  
Mine spindling into longitude immense,  
In spite of gravity, and sage remark  
'That I myself am but a fleeting shade,  
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance,  
I view the muscular proportion'd limb  
Transform'd to a lean shank. The shapeless  
pair,  
As they design'd to mock me, at my side,  
Take step for step; and, as I near approach  
The cottage, walk along the plaster'd wall,  
Prepost'rous sight! the legs without the man.  
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep  
Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the bents,  
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,  
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine  
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,  
And, fledg'd with icy feathers, nod superb.  
The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence  
Screens them, and seem half petrified to sleep  
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait  
Their wonted fodder; not like hung'ring man,  
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,  
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.  
He from the stack carves out the accusom'd  
load,

Deep-plunging, and again deep-plunging oft,  
His broad keen knife into the solid mass;  
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,  
With such undeviating and even force  
He severs it away; no needless care,  
Lest storm should overset the leaning pile  
Deciduous, or its own unbalanc'd weight.  
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd  
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe,  
And drive the wedge, in yonder forest drear,  
From morn to eve his solitary task.  
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears  
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half  
cur—  
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel  
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a  
frisk  
Wide-scamp'ring, snatches up the drifted snow  
With iv'ry teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;  
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for  
joy.  
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl  
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for  
aught,  
But now and then with pressure of his thumb  
T' adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,  
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud  
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.  
Now from the roost, or from the neighb'ring  
pale,  
Where diligent to catch the first faint gleam  
Of smiling day, they gossip'd side by side,

Come trooping at the housewife's well known  
call

The feather'd tribes domestick. Half on wing,  
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,  
Conscious and fearful of too deep a plunge.

The sparrows peep, and quit the shelt'ring eaves,  
To seize the fair occasion ; well they eye

The scatter'd grain, and thievishly resolv'd  
T' escape th' impending famine, often scar'd  
As oft return—a pert voracious kind.

Clean riddance quickly made, one only care  
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,  
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resign'd  
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes

His wonted strut ; and, wading at their head  
With well-consider'd steps, seems to resent  
His alter'd gait, and stateliness retrench'd.

How find the myriads, that in summer cheer  
The hills and valleys with their ceaseless songs,  
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now ?

Earth yields them naught ; th' imprison'd worm  
is safe

Beneath the frozen clod ; all seeds of herbs  
Lie cover'd close ; and berry-bearing thorns,  
That feed the thrush, (whatever some suppose,)  
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.

The long-protracted rigour of the year  
Thins all their num'rous flocks. In chinks and  
holes

Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,  
As instinct prompts ; self-buried ere they die.  
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,

Where neither grub, nor root, nor earth-nut,  
now

Repays their labour more; and perch'd aloft  
By the way-side, or stalking in the path,  
Lean pensioners upon the trav'ler's track,  
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to  
them,

Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.

The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,  
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,

Indurated and fix'd, the snowy weight

Lies undissolv'd; while silently beneath,

And unperceiv'd, the current steals away.

Not so where, scornful of a check, it leaps

The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,

And wantons in the pebbly gulf below :

No frost can bind it there : its utmost force

Can but arrest the light and smoky mist,

That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.

And see where it has hung the embroider'd  
banks

With forms so various, that no pow'rs of art,

The pencil, or the pen, may trace the scene !

Here glitt'ring turrets rise, upbearing high,

(Fantastick misarrangement !) on the roof

Large growth of what may seem the sparkling  
trees

And shrubs of fairy land. The crystal drops

That trickled down the branches, fast congeal'd

Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,

And prop the pile they but adorn'd before.

Here grotto within grotto safe defies

The sunbeam ; there, emboss'd and fretted wild,  
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes  
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain  
The likeness of some object seen before.  
Thus Nature works as if to mock at Art,  
And in defiance of her rival pow'rs ;  
By these fortuitous and random strokes  
Performing such inimitable feats,  
As she with all her rules can never reach.  
Less worthy of applause, though more admir'd,  
Because a novelty, the work of man,  
Imperial mistress of the fur clad Russ,  
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,  
The wonder of the North. No forest fell  
When thou wouldst build ; no quarry sent its  
stores,  
T' enrich thy walls: but thou did'st hew the floods  
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.  
In such a palace Aristæus found  
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale  
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear :  
In such a palace poetry might place  
The armory of Winter ; where his troops,  
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,  
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,  
And snow, that often blinds the trav'ler's course,  
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.  
Silently as a dream the fabrick rose ;  
No sound of hammer or of saw was there :  
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts  
Were soon conjoin'd, nor other cement ask'd  
Than water interfus'd, to make them one.

Lamps gracefully dispos'd, and of all hues,  
Illumin'd ev'ry side : a wat'ry light  
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that  
    seem'd

Another moon new ris'n, or meteor fall'n  
From Heav'n to Earth, of lambent flame serene  
So stood the brittle prodigy ; though smooth  
And slipp'ry the materials, yet frost-bound  
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,  
That royal residence might well befit,  
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths  
Of flow'rs that fear'd no enemy but warmth,  
Blush'd on the pannels. Mirror needed none  
Where all was vitreous ; but in order due  
Convivial table and commodious seat  
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were  
    there.

Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august,  
The same lubricity was found in all,  
And all was moist to the warm touch ; a scene  
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,  
And soon to slide into a stream again.  
Alas ! 'twas but a mortifying stroke  
Of undesign'd severity, that glanc'd,  
(Made by a monarch,) on her own estate,  
On human grandeur and the courts of kings.  
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show  
'Twas durable ; as worthless, as it seem'd  
Intrinsically precious ; to the foot  
Treach'rous and false ; it smil'd, and it was cold.  
Great princes have great play-things. Some  
    have play'd

At hewing mountains into men, and some  
At building human wonders mountain-high.  
Some have amus'd the dull, sad years of life,  
(Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad,)  
With schemes of monumental fame ; and sought  
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,  
Short liv'd themselves, t' immortalize their bones.  
Some seek diversion in the tented field,  
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.  
But war's a game, which, were their subjects  
wise,

Kings would not play at. Nations would do well,  
T' extort their truncheons from the puny hands  
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds  
Are gratified with mischief ; and who spoil,  
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.

When Babel was confounded, and the great  
Confed'racy of projectors wild and vain  
Was split into diversity of tongues,  
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,  
These to the upland, to the valley those,  
God drove asunder, and assign'd their lot  
To all the nations. Ample was the boon  
He gave them, in its distribution fair  
And equal ; and he bade them dwell in peace.  
Peace was awhile their care ; they plough'd, and  
sow'd,

And reap'd their plenty without grudge or strife.  
But violence can never longer sleep  
Than human passions please. In every heart  
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war ;  
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze.

Cain had already shed a brother's blood :  
The deluge wash'd it out : but left unquench'd  
The seeds of murder in the breast of man.  
Soon by a righteous judgment in the line  
Of his descending progeny was found  
The first artificer of death ; the shrewd  
Contriver, who first sweated at the forge,  
And forc'd the blunt and yet unbloodied steel  
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.  
Him, Tubal nam'd, the Vulcan of old times,  
The sword and falchion their inventor claim ;  
And the first smith was the first murd'rer's son.  
His art surviv'd the waters ; and ere long,  
When man was multiplied and spread abroad  
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call  
'These meadows and that range of hills his own,  
The tasted sweets of property begat  
Desire of more ; and industry in some,  
T' improve and cultivate their just demesne,  
Made others covet what they saw so fair.  
Thus war began on Earth : these fought for spoil,  
And those in self-defence. Savage at first  
The onset, and irregular. At length  
One eminent above the rest for strength,  
For stratagem, for courage, or for all,  
Was chosen leader ; him they served in war,  
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds,  
Rev'rence no less. Who could with him compare ?  
Or who so worthy to control themselves,  
As he, whose prowess had subdu'd their foes ?  
Thus war, affording field for the display  
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,

Which have their exigencies too, and call  
For skill in government, at length made king.  
King was a name too proud for man to wear  
With modesty and meekness ; and the crown  
So dazzling in their eyes, who set it on,  
Was sure t' intoxicate the brows it bound ;  
It is the abject property of most,  
That, being parcel of the common mass,  
And destitute of means to raise themselves,  
They sink, and settle lower than they need.]  
They know not what it is to feel within  
A comprehensive faculty, that grasps  
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,  
Almost without an effort, plans too vast  
For their conception, which they cannot move.  
Conscious of impotence they soon grow drunk  
With gazing, when they see an able man  
Step forth to notice ; and, besotted thus,  
Build him a pedestal, and say, " Stand there,  
" And be our admiration and our praise."  
They roll themselves before him in the dust,  
Then most deserving in their own account,  
When most extravagant in his applause,  
As if, exalting him, they rais'd themselves.  
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound  
And sober judgment, that he is but a man,  
They demi-deify and fume him so,  
That in due season he forgets it too.  
Inflated and astrut with self conceit,  
He gulps the windy diet ; and ere long,  
Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks  
The world was made in vain, if not for him..

Thenceforth they are his cattle ; drudges, born  
To bear his burdens, drawing in his gears,  
And sweating in his service, his caprice  
Becomes the soul that animates them all.  
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives  
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,  
An easy reck'ning : and they think the same.  
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings  
Were burnish'd into heroes, and became  
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp ;  
Storks among frogs, that have but croak'd and  
died.

Strange, that such folly, as lifts bloated man  
To eminence, fit only for a god,  
Should ever drivel out of human lips,  
E'en in the cradled weakness of the world !  
Still stranger much, that, when at length mankind  
Had reach'd the sinewy firmness of their youth,  
And could discriminate and argue well  
On subjects more mysterious, they were yet  
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear  
And quake before the gods themselves had made :  
But above measure strange, that neither proof  
Of sad experience, nor examples set  
By some whose patriot virtue has prevail'd,  
Can even now, when they are grown mature  
In wisdom, and with philosophick deeds  
Familiar, serve t' emancipate the rest !  
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone  
To rev'rence what is ancient, and can plead  
A course of long observance for its use,  
That even servitude, the worst of ills,

Because deliver'd down from sire to son,  
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.  
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock  
Of rational discussion, that a man,  
Compounded and made up like other men  
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust  
And folly in as ample measure meet  
As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,  
Should be a despot absolute, and boast  
Himself the only freeman of his land?  
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will,  
Wage war, with any or with no pretence  
Of provocation giv'n; or wrong sustain'd,  
And force the beggarly last doit, by means  
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch  
Of poverty, that thus he may procure  
His thousands, weary of penurious life,  
A splendid opportunity to die?  
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old  
Jotham ascrib'd to his assembled trees  
In politick convention) put your trust  
I' th' shadow of a bramble, and, reclin'd  
In fancied peace beneath his dang'rous branch,  
Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,  
Where find ye passive fortitude? Whence springs  
Your self-denying zeal, that holds it good  
To stroke the prickly grievance, and to hang  
His thorns with streamers of continual praise?  
We too are friends to loyalty. We love  
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,  
And reigns content within them: him we serve  
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free:

But recollecting still that he is man,  
We trust him not too far. King though he be,  
And king in England too, he may be weak  
And vain enough to be ambitious still ;  
May exercise amiss his proper pow'rs,  
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant !  
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,  
T' administer, to guard, t' adorn the state  
But not to warp or change it. We are his,  
To serve him nobly in the common cause,  
True to the death ; but not to be his slaves.  
Mark now the diff'rence, ye that boast your love  
Of Kings, between your loyalty and ours.  
We love the man ; the paltry pageant, you :  
We the chief patron of the commonwealth ;  
You, the regardless author of its wocs :  
We, for the sake of liberty, a king ;  
You, chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake :  
Our love is principle, and has its root  
In reason ; is judicious, manly, free ;  
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,  
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.  
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,  
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,  
I would not be a king to be belov'd  
Causeless, and daub'd with undiscerning praise,  
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,  
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

Whose freedom is by suff'rance, and at will  
Of a superiour, he is never free.  
Who lives, and is not weary of a life  
Expos'd to manacles, deserves them well.

The state that strives for liberty, though foil'd,  
And forc'd to abandon what she bravely sought,  
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,  
And pity for her loss. But that's a cause  
Not often unsuccessful : pow'r usurp'd  
Is weakness when oppos'd ; conscious of wrong,  
'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight.

But slaves, that once conceive the glowing  
thought

Of freedom, in that hope itself possess  
All that the contest calls for ; spirit, strength,  
The scorn of danger, and united hearts ;  
The surest presage of the good they seek.\*

Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious  
more

To France than all her losses and defeats,  
Old or of later date, by sea or land,  
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old  
Which God aveng'd on Pharaoh—the Bastile ;  
Ye horrid tow'rs, th' abode of broken hearts :  
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,  
That monarchs have supplied from age to age  
With musick, such as suits their sov'reign ears—  
The sighs and groans of miserable men !  
There's not an English heart that would not leap  
To hear that ye were fall'n at last ; to know

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\*The author hopes that he shall not be censured for unnecessary warmth upon so interesting a subject. He is aware, that it is become almost fashionable, to stigmatize such sentiments as no better than empty declamation ; but it is an ill symptom, and peculiar to modern times.

That e'en our enemies, so oft employ'd  
In forging chains for us, themselves are free.  
For he who values, Liberty, confines  
His zeal for her predominance within  
No narrow bounds ; her cause engages him  
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cause of man.  
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,  
Immur'd though unaccus'd, condemn'd untried,  
Cruelly spar'd, and hopeless of escape.  
There, like the visionary emblem seen  
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,  
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,  
Still lives, though all his pleasant boughs are  
gone.

To count the hour-bell and expect no change ;  
And ever as the sullen sound is heard,  
Still to reflect, that, though a joyless note  
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,  
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large  
Account it musick ; that it summons some  
To theatre, or jocund feast, or ball ;  
The wearied hireling finds it a release  
From labour ; and the lover, who has chid  
Its long delay, feels ev'ry welcome stroke  
Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight—  
To fly for refuge from distracting thought  
To such amusements of ingenious wo  
Contrives, hard shifting, and without her tools—  
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,  
In stagg'ring types, his predecessor's tale,  
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own—  
'To turn purveyor to an overgorg'd

And bloated spider, till the pamper'd pest  
Is made familiar, watches his approach,  
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend—  
To wear out time in numb'ring to and fro  
The studs that thick emboss his iron door ;  
Then downward and then upward, then aslant,  
And then alternate ; with a sickly hope  
By dint of change to give his tasteless task  
Some relish ; till the sum, exactly found  
In all directions, he begins again—  
O comfortless existence ! hemm'd around  
With woes, which who that suffers would not  
kneel

And beg for exile, or the pangs of death ?  
That man should thus encroach on fellow man,  
Abridge him of his just and native rights,  
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold  
Upon th' endearments of domestick life  
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,  
And doom him for perhaps a heedless word  
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,  
Moves indignation, makes the name of king,  
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)  
As dreadful as the Manichean god,  
Ador'd through fear, strong only to destroy.

'Tis liberty alone, that gives the flow'r  
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume ;  
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,  
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,  
Is evil : hurts the faculties, impedes  
Their progress in the road of science ; blinds  
The eyesight of Discovery ; and begets,

In those that suffer it, a sordid mind,  
Bestial, a meager intellect, unfit  
To be the tenant of man's noble form.  
Thee therefore still, blame-worthy as thou art,  
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeez'd  
By publick exigence, till annual food  
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,  
Thee I account still happy, and the chief  
Among the nations, seeing thou art free ;  
My native nook of earth ! Thy clime is rude,  
Replete with vapours, and disposes much  
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine :  
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft  
And plausible than social life requires,  
And thou hast need of discipline and art,  
To give thee what politer France receives  
From Nature's bounty—that humane address  
And sweetness, with which no pleasure is  
In converse, either starv'd by cold reserve,  
Or flush'd by fierce dispute, a senseless brawl.  
Yet, being free, I love thee : for the sake  
Of that one feature can be well content,  
Disgrac'd as thou hast been, poor as thou art,  
To seek no sublunary rest beside.  
But once enslav'd, farewell ! I could endure  
Chains no where patiently ; and chains at home,  
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.  
Then what were left of roughness in the grain  
Of British natures, wanting its excuse  
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust  
And shock me. I should then with double pain  
Feel all the rigour of thy fickle clime ;

And, if I must bewail the blessing lost,  
For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled,  
I would at least bewail it under skies  
Milder, among a people less austere ;  
In scenes, which having never known me free,  
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.  
Do I forebode impossible events,  
And tremble at vain dreams ? Heav'n grant I  
may !

But th' age of virtuous politicks is past,  
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.  
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,  
And we too wise to trust them. He that takes  
Deep in his soft credulity the stamp  
Design'd by loud declaimers on the part  
Of liberty, (themselves the slaves of lust,)  
Incurs derision for his easy faith  
And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough :  
For when was publick virtue to be found,  
Where private was not ? Can he love the whole,  
Who loves no part ? He be a nation's friend,  
Who is in truth the friend of no man there ?  
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause,  
Who slights the charities, for whose dear sake,  
That country, if at all, must be belov'd ?

'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad  
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale  
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts  
So loose to private duty, that no brain  
Healthful and undisturb'd by factious fumes,  
Can dream them trusty to the gen'ral weal.  
Such were they not of old, whose temper'd blades

Dispers'd the shackles of usurp'd control,  
And hew'd them link from link ; then Albion's  
sons

Were sons indeed ; they felt a filial heart  
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs ;  
And, shining each in his domestick sphere,  
Shone brighter still, once call'd to publick view.  
'Tis therefore many, whose sequester'd lot  
Forbids their interference, looking on,  
Anticipate perforce some dire event ;  
And, seeing the old castle of the state,  
That promis'd once more firmness, so assail'd,  
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,  
Stand motionless expectants of its fall.  
All has its date below ; the fatal hour  
Was register'd in Heav'd ere time began.  
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works  
Die too : the deep foundations that we lay,  
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.  
We build with what we deem eternal rock ;  
A distant age asks where the fabric stood ;  
And in the dust, sifted and search'd in vain,  
The undiscoverable secret sleeps.

But there is yet a liberty, unsung  
By poets, and by senators uprais'd,  
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow'rs  
Of Earth and Hell confed'rate take away :  
A liberty, which persecution, fraud,  
Oppression, prisons, have no pow'r to bind,  
Which whoso tastes can be enslav'd no more.  
'Tis liberty of heart deriv'd from Heav'n,  
Bought with *his* blood, who gave it to mankind,

And seal'd with the same token. It is held  
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure  
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath  
And promise of a God. His other gifts  
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,  
And are august ! but this transcends them all.  
His other works, the visible display  
Of all-creating energy and might,  
Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the word  
That, finding an interminable space  
Unoccupied, has fill'd the void so well,  
And made so sparkling what was dark before.  
But these are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,  
Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,  
Might well suppose th' artificer divine  
Meant it eternal, had he not himself  
Pronounc'd it transient, glorious as it is,  
And, still designing a more glorious far,  
Doom'd it as insufficient for his praise.  
These therefore are occasional, and pass ;  
Form'd for the confutation of the fool,  
Whose lying heart disputes against a God ;  
That office serv'd, they must be swept away,  
Not so the labours of his love : they shine  
In other heav'ns than these that we behold,  
And fade not. There is paradise that fears  
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends  
Large prelibation oft to saints below.  
Of these the first in order, and the pledge,  
And confident assurance of the rest,  
Is liberty ; a flight into his arms,  
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,

A clear escape from tyrannising lust,  
And full immunity from penal wo.

Chains are the portion of revolted man,  
Stripes, and a dungeon ; and his body serves  
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,  
Opprobrious residence, he finds them all.  
Propense his heart to idols, he is held  
In silly dotage on created things,  
Careless of their creator. And that low  
And sordid gravitation of his pow'rs  
To a vile clod, so draws him, with such force  
Resistless from the centre he should seek,  
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes  
Tend downward ; his ambition is to sink,  
To reach a depth profounder still, and still  
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss  
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.  
But ere he gain the comfortless repose  
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul  
In Heav'n-renouncing exile, he endures—  
What does he not, from lusts oppos'd in vain,  
And self-reproaching conscience ? He foresees  
The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,  
Fortune, and dignity ; the loss of all  
That can ennoble man and make frail life,  
Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,  
Far worse than all the plagues with which his  
sins  
Infect his happiest moments, he forbodes  
Ages of hopeless mis'ry. Future death,  
And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,  
Like that which sends him to the dusty grave :

But unrepealable, enduring, death.  
Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears :  
What none can prove a forgery, may be true,  
What none but bad men wish exploded, must ;  
That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud  
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst  
Of laughter his compunctions are sincere ;  
And he abhors the jest by which he shines.  
Remorse begets reform. His master-lust  
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,  
And seems dethron'd and vanquish'd. Peace  
ensues,

But spurious and short liv'd : the puny child  
Of self-congratulating Pride begot  
On fancied Innocence. Again he falls,  
And fights again ; but finds, his best essay  
A presage ominous, portending still  
Its own dishonour by a worse relapse.  
Till Nature, unavailing Nature, foil'd  
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,  
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now  
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cause  
Perversely, which of late she so condemn'd ;  
With shallow shifts and old devices, worn  
And tatter'd in the service of debauch,  
Cov'ring his shame from his offended sight.

“ Hath God indeed giv'n appetites to man,  
And stor'd the earth so plenteously with means  
To gratify the hunger of his wish ;  
And doth he reprobate, and will he damn  
The use of his own bounty ? making first  
So frail a kind, and then enacting laws

So strict, that less than perfect must despair?  
Falsehood! which whoso but suspects of truth,  
Dishonours God, and makes a slave of man.  
Do they themselves, who undertake for hire  
The teacher's office, and dispense at large  
Their weekly dole of edifying strains,  
Attend to their own music? have they faith  
In what, with such solemnity of tone  
And gesture, they propound to our belief?  
Nay—Conduct hath the loudest tongue. The  
voice

Is but an instrument, on which the priest  
May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,  
The unequivocal, authentic deed,  
We find sound argument, we read the heart."

Such reas'nings (if that name must needs be-  
long

T' excuses in which reason has no part)  
Serve to compose a spirit well inclin'd  
To live on terms of amity with vice,  
And sin without disturbance. Often urg'd,  
(As often as, libidinous discourse  
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes  
Of theological and grave import,)  
They gain at last his unreserv'd assent;  
Till, harden'd his heart's temper in the forge  
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,  
He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing  
moves,

Or nothing much, his constancy in ill;  
Vain tamp'ring has but foster'd his disease;  
'Tis desp'rate, and he sleeps the sleep of death.

Haste, now, philosopher, and set him free.  
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear  
Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth  
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,  
Consulted and obey'd, to guide his steps  
Directly to the *first and only fair*.  
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the pow'rs  
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise;  
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,  
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,  
Till it out-mantle all the pride of verse.—  
Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high sounding brass,  
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm  
The eclipse, that intercepts truth's heav'nly  
beam

And chills and darkens a wide wand'ring soul.  
The *still small voice* is wanted. He must speak,  
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect;  
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.

Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change  
That turns to ridicule the turgid speech  
And stately tone of moralists, who boast  
As if, like him of fabulous renown,  
'They had indeed ability to smooth  
The shag of savage nature, and were each  
An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song;  
But transformation of apostate man  
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,  
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,  
And he by means in philosophic eyes  
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves  
The wonder; humanizing what is brute

In the lost kind, extracting from the lips  
Of asps their venom, overpow'ring strength  
By weakness, and hostility by love.

Patriots have toil'd, and, in their country's  
cause

Bled nobly ; and their deeds, as they deserve,  
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge  
Their names to the sweet lyre. Th' historic  
muse,

Proud of the treasure, marches with it down  
To latest times ; and Sculpture, in her turn,  
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass  
To guard them, and t' immortalize her trust :  
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,  
To those, who, posted at the shrine of Truth,  
Have fall'n in her defence. A patriot's blood,  
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,  
And, for a time, ensure to his lov'd land  
The sweets of liberty and equal laws ;  
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,  
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed  
In confirmation of the noblest claim—  
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,  
To walk with God, to be divinely free.  
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.  
Yet few remember them. They liv'd unknown,  
Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,  
And chas'd them up to Heaven. Their ashes  
flew—

No marble tells us whither. With their names  
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song :  
And history, so warm on meaner themes,

Is cold on this. She execrates indeed  
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,  
But gives the glorious suff'ers little praise.\*

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain  
That hellish foes, confed'rate for his harm,  
Can wind around him, but he casts it off  
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.  
He looks abroad into the varied field  
Of nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd  
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.  
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,  
And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy  
With a propriety that none can feel,  
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,  
Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,  
And smiling say—"My Father made them all!"  
Are they not his by a peculiar right,  
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,  
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,  
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted  
mind

With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love,  
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world  
So cloth'd with beauty for rebellious man?  
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap  
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good  
In senseless riot; but ye will not find  
In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,

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\* See Hume.

A liberty like his, who, unimpeach'd  
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,  
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,  
And has a richer use of yours than you.  
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth  
Of no mean city ; plann'd or ere the hills  
Were built, the fountains open'd, or the sea,  
With all his roaring multitude of waves.  
His freedom is the same in ev'ry state ;  
And no condition of this changeful life,  
So manifold in cares, whose ev'ry day  
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less :  
For he has wings, that neither sickness, pain,  
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.  
No nook so narrow, but he spreads them there  
With ease, and is at large. Th' oppressor holds  
His body bound ; but knows not what a range  
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain ;  
And that to bind him is a vain attempt.  
Whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells,  
Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st  
taste  
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,  
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :  
Thine eye shall be instructed ; and thine heart,  
Made pure, shall relish with divine delight,  
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought  
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone,  
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb  
It yields them : or, recumbent on its brow,  
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread  
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away

From inland regions to the distant main.  
Man views it, and admires ; but rests content  
With what he views. The landscape has his  
praise,  
But not its author. Unconcern'd who form'd  
The Paradise he sees, he finds it such,  
And such well pleas'd to find it, asks no more.  
Not so the mind that has been touch'd from  
Heav'n,  
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught  
To read His wonders, in whose thought the  
world,  
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.  
Nor for its own sake merely, but for his  
Much more who fashion'd it, he gives it praise ;  
Praise that from earth resulting, as it ought,  
To earth's acknowledg'd sov'reign, finds at once  
Its only just proprietor in Him.  
The soul that sees him, or receives sublim'd  
New faculties, or learns at least t' employ  
More worthily the powers she own'd before,  
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze  
Of ignorance, till then she overlook'd,  
A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms  
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute ;  
The unambiguous footsteps of the God,  
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,  
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.  
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds  
With those fair ministers of light to man,  
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,

Sweet conference. Inquires what strains were  
they

With which Heaven rang, when every star, in  
haste

To gratulate the new-created earth,  
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God  
Shouted for joy.—“ Tell me, ye shining hosts,  
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,  
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,  
If from your elevation, whence ye view  
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,  
And systems, of whose birth no tidings yet  
Have reach'd this nether world, ye spy a race  
Favour'd as ours: transgressors from the womb  
And hasting to a grave, yet doom'd to rise,  
And to possess a brighter Heaven than yours?  
As one, who, long detain'd on foreign shores,  
Pants to return, and when he sees afar  
His country's weather-bleach'd and batter'd  
rocks,

From the green wave emerging, darts an eye  
Radiant with joy toward the happy land;  
So I with animated hopes behold,  
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,  
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,  
Ordain'd to guide th' embodied spirit home  
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.  
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires  
That give assurance of their own success,  
And that, infus'd from Heaven, must thither  
tend.”

So reads he Nature, whom the lamp of truth

Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious Word !  
Which whoso sees, no longer wanders lost,  
With intellects bemaz'd in endless doubt,  
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built  
With means that wear not, till by thee employ'd,  
Worlds that had never been, hadst thou in  
strength

Been less, or less benevolent than strong.  
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy pow'r  
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears  
That hear not, or receive not their report  
In vain thy creatures testify of thee,  
Till thou proclaim thyself. Theirs is indeed  
A teaching voice ; but 'tis the praise of thine,  
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,  
And with the boon gives talents for its use.  
Till thou art heard, imaginations vain  
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell :  
Yet deem'd oracular, lure down to death  
The uninform'd and heedless souls of men.  
We give to chance, blind chance, ourselves as  
blind,

The glory of thy work ; which yet appears  
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,  
Challenging human scrutiny, and prov'd  
Then skilful most when most severely judg'd.  
But chance is not ; or is not where thou reign'st ;  
Thy providence forbids that fickle pow'r  
(If pow'r she be, that works but to confound)  
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.  
Yet thus we dote, refusing while we can,  
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves

Gods such as guilt makes welcome ; gods that  
sleep,  
Or disregard our follies, or that sit  
Amus'd spectators of this bustling stage.  
Thee we reject, unable to abide  
Thy purity, till pure as thou art pure,  
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause,  
For which we shunn'd and hated thee before.  
Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,  
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heav'n  
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.  
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not,  
Till thou hast touch'd them; 'tis the voice of song,  
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works ;  
Which he that hears it, with a shout repeats,  
And adds his rapture to the general praise !  
In that blest moment, Nature, throwing wide  
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile  
The author of her beauties, who, retir'd  
Behind his own creation, works unseen  
By the impure, and hears his pow'r denied :  
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,  
Their only point of rest, eternal Word !  
From thee departing, they are lost, and rove  
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.  
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,  
His high endeavour, and his glad success,  
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.  
But O thou bounteous Giver of all good,  
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown !  
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,  
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

# THE TASK.

## BOOK VI.

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### THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

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#### ARGUMENT OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

Bells at a distance—Their effect—A fine noon in winter—A sheltered walk—Meditation better than books—Our familiarity with the course of Nature makes it appear less wonderful than it is—The transformation that Spring effects in a shrubbery, described—A mistake concerning the course of Nature corrected—God maintains it by an unremitted act—The amusements fashionable at this hour of the day reprov'd—Animals happy, a delightful sight—Origin of cruelty to animals—That it is a great crime proved from Scripture—That proof illustrated by a tale—A line drawn between the lawful and unlawful destruction of them—Their good and useful properties insisted on—Apologies for the encomiums bestowed by the author on animals—Instances of man's extravagant praise of man—The groans of the creation shall have an end—A view taken of the restoration of all things—An invocation and an invitation of Him who shall bring it to pass—The retired man vindicated from the charge of uselessness—Conclusion.

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds,  
And as the mind is pitch'd, the ear is pleas'd  
With melting airs or martial, brisk, or grave;  
Some chord in unison with what we hear  
Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies,  
How soft the music of those village bells,  
Falling at intervals upon the ear  
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,  
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,  
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!  
With easy force it opens all the cells  
Where Mem'ry slept. Wherever I have heard  
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,  
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.  
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,  
That in a few short moments I retrace  
(As in a map the voyager his course)  
The windings of my way through many years.  
Short as in retrospect the journey seems,  
It seem'd not always short; the rugged path,  
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,  
Mov'd many a sigh at its disheart'ning length.  
Yet feeling present evils, while the past  
Faintly impress the mind or not at all,  
How readily we wish time spent revok'd,  
That we might try the ground again, where once  
(Through inexperience as we now perceive)  
We miss'd that happiness we might have found!  
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best  
friend!  
A father, whose authority, in show  
When most severe, and must'ring all its force,

Was but the graver countenance of love ;  
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might  
    low'r,  
And utter now and then an awful voice,  
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,  
Threat'ning at once and nourishing the plant.  
We lov'd, but not enough, the gentle hand  
That rear'd us. At a thoughtless age, allur'd  
By ev'ry gilded folly, we renounced  
His shelt'ring side, and wilfully forewent  
That converse which we now in vain regret.  
How gladly would the man recall to life  
The boy's neglected sire ! a mother too,  
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,  
Might he demand them at the gates of death.  
Sorrow has, since they went, subdu'd and tam'd  
The playful humour : he could now endure,  
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears,)  
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.  
But not to understand a treasure's worth,  
'Till time has stol'n away the slighted good,  
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,  
And makes the World the wilderness it is.  
The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,  
And, seeking grace t' improve the prize they  
    hold,  
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.  
The night was winter in its roughest mood ;  
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon  
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,  
And where the woods fence off the northern  
    blast,

The season smiles, resigning all its rage,  
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue  
Without a cloud, and white without a speck  
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.  
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale ;  
And through the trees I view th' embattled  
tow'r,

Whence all the music. I again perceive  
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,  
And settle in soft musings as I tread  
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,  
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.  
The roof, though movable through all its length  
As the wind sways it, has yet well suffic'd,  
And, intercepting in their silent fall  
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.  
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought  
The red-breast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes, and more than half sup-  
press'd :

Pleas'd with his solitude, and flitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he  
shakes

From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,  
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.  
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,  
Charms more than silence. Meditation here  
May think down hours to moments. Here the  
heart

May give a useful lesson to the head,  
And Learning wiser grow without his books.  
Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,

Have oft times no connexion. Knowledge dwells  
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;  
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.

Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,  
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,  
Till smooth'd, and squar'd, and fitted to its  
place,

Does but encumber whom it seems t' enrich.  
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;  
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

Books are not seldom talismans and spells,  
By which the magic art of shrewder wits  
Hold an unthinking multitude enthral'd.

Some to the fascination of a name,  
Surrender judgment hood-wink'd. Some the  
style

Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds  
Of error leads them, by a tune entranc'd.

While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear  
The insupportable fatigue of thought,  
And swallowing, therefore, without pause or  
choice

The total grist unsifted, husks and all.

But tree and rivulets, whose rapid course  
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,  
And sheep-walks populous with bleating lambs,  
And lanes, in which the primrose ere her time  
Peeps through the moss, that clothes the haw-  
thorn root,

Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth,  
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won  
By slow solicitation, seize at once

The roving thought and fix it on themselves.

What prodigies can pow'r divine perform  
More grand than it produces year by year,  
And all in sight of inattentive man?  
Familiar with th' effect, we slight the cause,  
And in the constancy of Nature's course,  
The regular return of genial months,  
And renovation of a faded world,  
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,  
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race  
Of th' undeviating and punctual sun,  
How would the world admire! But speaks it less  
An agency divine, to make him know  
His moment when to sink and when to rise,  
Age after age, than to arrest his course?  
All we behold is miracle; but seen  
So duly, all is miracle in vain.  
Where now the vital energy, that mov'd  
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph  
Through th' imperceptible meand'ring veins  
Of leaf and flow'r? It sleeps; and th' icy  
touch  
Of unprolific winter has impress'd  
A cold stagnation on th' intestine tide.  
But let the months go round, a few short months,  
And all shall be restor'd. These naked shoots,  
Barren as lances, among which the wind  
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,  
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,  
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,  
Shall boast new charms, and more than they  
have lost.

Then each in its peculiar honours clad,  
Shall publish even to the distant eye  
Its family and tribe. Laburnum, rich  
In streaming gold ; syringa, iv'ry pure ;  
The scentless and the scented rose ; this red  
And of a humbler growth, other\* tall,  
And throwing up into the darkest gloom  
Of neighb'ring cypress, or more sable yew,  
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf,  
That the wind severs from the broken wave ;  
The lilac, various in array, now white,  
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set  
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if  
Studious of ornament, yet unresolv'd  
Which hue she most approv'd, she chose them  
all ;

Copious of flowers, the woodbine, pale and wan,  
But well compensating her sickly looks  
With never cloying odours, early and late ;  
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm  
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,  
That scarce a leaf appears ; mezereon, too,  
Though leafless, well-attir'd and thick beset  
With blushing wreaths, investing every spray ;  
Althæa with the purple eye ; the broom  
Yellow and bright, as bullion unalloy'd,  
Her blossoms ; and luxuriant above all  
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,  
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf  
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more

---

\* The Guelder Rose.

The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.—  
These have been, and these shall be in their  
day ;

And all this uniform uncolour'd scene  
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,  
And flush into variety again.

From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,  
Is Nature's progress, when she lectures man  
In heav'nly truth ; evincing, as she makes  
The grand transition, that their lives and works  
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.

The beauties of the wilderness are his,  
That makes so gay the solitary place,  
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms,  
That cultivation glories in, are his.

He sets the bright procession on its way,  
And marshals all the order of the year ;  
He marks the bounds, which winter may not  
pass,

And blunts his pointed fury ; in its case,  
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,  
Uninjur'd, with inimitable art ;  
And, ere one flow'ry season fades and dies,  
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.

Some say that in the origin of things,  
When all creation started into birth,  
The infant elements receiv'd a law  
From which they swerv'd not since. That un-  
der force

Of that controlling ordinance they move,  
And need not His immediate hand who first  
Prescrib'd their course, to regulate it now.

Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God  
Th' encumbrance of his own concerns, and  
spare

The great artificer of all that moves  
The stress of a continual act, the pain  
Of unremitted vigilance and care,  
As too laborious and severe a task.  
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,  
To span omnipotence, and measure might  
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule  
And standard of his own, that is to-day,  
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.  
But how should matter occupy a charge,  
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law  
So vast in its demands, unless impell'd  
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,  
And under pressure of some conscious cause ?  
The Lord of all, himself through all diffus'd,  
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.  
Nature is but a name for an effect,  
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire,  
By which the mighty process is maintain'd,  
Who sleeps not, is not weary ; in whose sight  
Slow circling ages are as transient days ;  
Whose work is without labour ; whose designs  
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts ;  
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.  
Him blind antiquity profan'd, not serv'd,  
With self-taught rites, and under various names,  
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,  
And Flora, and Vertumnus ; peopling earth  
With tutelary goddesses and gods,

That were not ; and commending as they would  
To each some province, garden, field, or grove.  
But all are under one. One spirit—His  
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding  
brows—

Rules universal nature. Not a flower  
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,  
Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inspires  
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,  
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,  
In grains as countless as the seaside sands,  
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.  
Happy who walks with him ! whom what he  
finds

Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower  
Of what he views of beautiful or grand  
In nature, from the broad majestic oak  
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,  
Prompts with remembrance of a present God  
His presence, who made all so fair, perceiv'd,  
Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene  
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.  
Though winter had been gone, had man been  
true

And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,  
Yet not in vengeance ; as this smiling sky,  
So soon succeeding such an angry night,  
And these dissolving snows, and this clear  
stream

Recov'ring fast its liquid music, prove.

Who, then, that has a mind well strung and  
tuned

To contemplation, and within his reach  
A scene so friendly to his fav'rite task,  
Would waste attention at the chequer'd board.  
His host of wooden warriors to and fro  
Marching and countermarching, with an eye  
As fix'd as marble, with a forehead ridg'd  
And furrow'd into storms, and with a hand  
Trembling, as if eternity were hung  
In balance on his conduct of a pin ?  
Nor envies he aught more their idle sport,  
Who pant with application misapplied  
To trivial toys, and, pushing iv'ry balls  
Across a velvet level, feel a joy  
Akin to rapture, when the bauble finds  
Its destin'd goal, of difficult access.  
Nor deems he wiser him, who gives his noon  
To miss, the mercer's plague from shop to shop  
Wand'ring, and litt'ring with unfolded silks  
The polish'd counter, and approving none,  
Or promising with smiles to call again.  
Nor him, who by his vanity seduc'd,  
And sooth'd into a dream, that he discerns  
The diff'rence of a Guido from a daub,  
Frequents the crowded auction : station'd there  
As duly as the Langford of the show,  
With glass at eye, and catalogue in hand,  
And tongue accomplish'd in the fulsome cant  
And pedantry that coxcombs learn with ease :  
Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls,  
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,  
Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate,  
That he has let it pass—but never bids !

Here unmolested, through whatever sign  
The sun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,  
For freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,  
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.  
E'en in the spring and playtime of the year,  
That calls the unwonted villager abroad  
With all her little ones, a sportive train,  
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,  
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick  
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook—  
These shades are all my own. The tim'rous hare,  
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,  
Scarce shuns me; and the stock-dove, unalarm'd,  
Sits cooing in the pinetree, nor suspends  
His long love ditty for my near approach.  
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm,  
That age or injury has hollow'd deep,  
Where, on his bed of wool and matted leaves,  
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth,  
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,  
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play;  
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,  
Ascends the neighb'ring beech; there whisks  
his brush,  
And perks his ears, and stamps, and cries aloud,  
With all the prettiness of feign'd alarm,  
And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit  
For human fellowship, as being void  
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike  
To love and friendship both, that is not pleas'd  
With sight of animals enjoying life,

Nor feels their happiness augment his own.  
The bounding fawn, that darts across the glade  
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart  
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee ;  
The horse as wanton, and almost as fleet,  
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,  
Then stops, and snorts, and throwing high his  
heels,  
Starts to the voluntary race again ;  
The very kine that gambol at high noon,  
The total herd receiving first from one,  
That leads the dance, a summons to be gay,  
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth  
Their efforts, yet resolv'd, with one consent,  
To give such act and utt'rance as they may  
To ecstasy too big to be suppress'd—  
These, and a thousand images of bliss,  
With which kind Nature graces ev'ry scene,  
Where cruel man defeats not her design,  
Impart to the benevolent, who wish  
All that are capable of pleasure pleas'd,  
A far superior happiness to theirs,  
The comfort of a reasonable joy.

Man scarce had ris'n, obedient to his call  
Who form'd him from the dust, his future grave,  
When he was crown'd as never king was since.  
God set the diadem upon his head,  
And angel choirs attended. Wond'ring stood  
The new-made monarch, while before him pass'd,  
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,  
The creatures, summon'd from their various  
haunts,

To see their sov'reign, and confess his sway.  
Vast was his empire, absolute his pow'r,  
Or bounded only by a law, whose force  
'Twas his sublimest privilege to feel  
And own—the law of universal love.  
He rul'd with meekness, they obey'd with joy ;  
No cruel purpose lurk'd within his heart,  
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.  
So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,  
Where kindness on his part who rul'd the whole,  
Begot a tranquil confidence in all,  
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.  
But sin marr'd all : and the revolt of man,  
'That source of evils not exhausted yet,  
Was punish'd with revolt of his from him.  
Garden of God, how terrible the change  
Thy groves and lawns then witness'd ! Ev'ry  
heart,  
Each animal, of ev'ry name, conceiv'd  
A jealousy, and an instinctive fear,  
And, conscious of some danger, either fled  
Precipitate the loath'd abode of man,  
Or growl'd defiance in such angry sort,  
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.  
Thus harmony and family accord  
Were driv'n from Paradise ; and in that hour  
The seeds of cruelty, that since have swell'd  
To such gigantic and enormous growth,  
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.  
Hence date the persecution and the pain,  
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,  
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,

To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,  
Or his base gluttony, are causes good  
And just in his account, why bird and beast  
Should suffer torture, and the streams be died  
With blood of their inhabitants impal'd.  
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war  
Wag'd with defenceless innocence, while he,  
Not satisfied to prey on all around,  
Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs  
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.  
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes  
The most remote from his abhorr'd resort,  
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,  
They fear'd, and as his perfect image, lov'd.  
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,  
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains,  
Unvisited by man. There they are free,  
And howl and roar as likes them, uncontroll'd;  
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.  
Wo to the tyrant, if he dare intrude  
Within the confines of their wild domain:  
The lion tells him—I am monarch here—  
And if he spare him, spares him on the terms  
Of royal mercy, and through gen'rous scorn  
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.  
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn  
Or by necessity constrain'd, they live  
Dependent upon man; those in his fields,  
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof.  
They prove too often at how dear a rate  
He sells protection—Witness at his foot  
The spaniel dying for some venial fault

Under dissection of the knotted scourge ;  
Witness the patient ox, with stripes and yells  
Driv'n to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,  
To madness ; while the savage at his heels  
Laughs at the frantic suff'rer's fury, spent  
Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.  
He too is witness, noblest of the train  
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse ;  
With unsuspecting readiness he takes  
His murd'rer on his back, and, push'd all day  
With bleeding sides and flanks that heave for life,  
To the far distant goal arrives and dies.  
So little mercy shows who needs so much !  
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,  
Denounce no doom on the delinquent ? None.  
He lives and o'er his brimming beaker boasts  
(As if barbarity were high desert,)  
'Th' inglorious feat, and clamorous in praise  
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose  
The honours of his matchless horse his own.  
But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,  
Is register'd in Heav'n ; and these no doubt,  
Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.  
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
But God will never. When he charg'd the Jew  
T' assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise ;  
And when the bush-exploring boy, that seiz'd  
The young, to let the parent bird go free ;  
Prov'd he not plainly, that his meaner works  
Are yet his care, and have an int'rest all,  
All, in the universal Father's love ?  
On Noah, and in him on all mankind,

The charter was conferr'd by which we hold  
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim  
O'er all we feed on pow'r of life and death.  
But read the instrument, and mark it well :  
Th' oppression of a tyrannous control  
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and  
yield,

Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous, through sin,  
Fed on the slain, but spare the living brute !

The Governor of all, himself to all  
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear  
The unfledg'd raven and the lion's whelp  
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs  
Of hunger unassuag'd, has interpos'd,  
Not seldom, his avenging arm, to smite  
Th' injurious trampler upon Nature's law,  
That claims forbearance even for a brute.  
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart ;  
And, prophet as he was, he might not strike  
The blameless animal, without rebuke,  
On which he rode. Her opportune offence  
Sav'd him, or the unrelenting seer had died.  
He sees that human equity is slack  
To interfere, though in so just a cause :  
And makes the task his own. Inspiring dumb  
And helpless victims with a sense so keen  
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength  
And such sagacity to take revenge,  
That oft the beast has seem'd to judge the man.  
An ancient, not a legendary tale,  
By one of sound intelligence rehears'd,  
(If such who plead for Providence may seem

In modern eyes,) shall make the doctrine clear.

Where England, stretch'd towards the setting  
sun,

Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,  
Dwelt young Misagathus; a scorner he  
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,  
Vicious in act, in temper savage-fierce.

He journey'd: and his chance was, as he went,  
To join a trav'ler, of far different note,  
Evander, fam'd for piety, for years  
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more.

Fame had not left the venerable man  
A stranger to the manners of the youth,  
Whose face, too, was familiar to his view.  
Their way was on the margin of the land,  
O'er the green summit of the rocks, whose base  
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so  
high.

The charity that warm'd his heart, was mov'd  
At sight of the man-monster. With a smile  
Gentle and affable, and full of grace,  
As fearful of offending whom he wish'd  
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths,  
Not hardly thunder'd forth or rudely press'd,  
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.

"And dost thou dream," th' impenetrable man  
Exclaim'd, "that me the lullabies of age,  
And fantasies of dotards, such as thou,  
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?  
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave  
Need no such aids as superstition lends  
To steel their hearts against the dread of death."

He spoke, and to the precipice at hand  
Push'd with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks,  
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought  
Of such a gulf as he designed his grave.  
But though the felon on his back could dare  
The dreadful leap, more rational, his steed  
Declin'd the death, and wheeling swiftly round.  
Or ere his hoof had press'd the crumbling verge,  
Baffled his rider, sav'd against his will.  
The frenzy of the brain may be redress'd  
By med'cine well applied, but without grace  
The heart's insanity admits no cure.  
Enrag'd the more, by what might have reform'd  
His horrible intent, again he sought  
Destruction, with a zeal to be destroy'd,  
With sounding whip and rowels died in blood,  
But still in vain. The Providence that meant  
A longer date to the far nobler beast,  
Spar'd yet again th' ignobler for his sake.  
And now, his prowess prov'd, and his sincere  
Incurable obduracy evinc'd,  
His rage grew cool, and, pleas'd perhaps t' have  
earn'd  
So cheaply, the renown of that attempt,  
With looks of some complacence he resum'd  
His road, deriding much the blank amaze  
Of good Evander, still where he was left  
Fix'd motionless, and petrified with dread.  
So on they far'd. Discourse on other themes  
Ensuing seem'd t' obliterate the past;  
And tamer for so much fury shown,  
(As is the course of rash and fiery men,)

The rude companion smil'd, as if transform'd—  
But 'twas a transient calm. A storm was near,  
An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.  
The impious challenger of Pow'r divine  
Was now to learn, that Heav'n, though slow to  
wrath,

Is never with impunity defied.  
His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,  
Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,  
Unbidden, and not now to be controll'd,  
Rush'd to the cliff, and, having reach'd it, stood,  
At once the shock unseated him : he flew  
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier ; and immers'd  
Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,  
The death he had deserv'd, and died alone.  
So God wrought double justice ; made the fool  
The victim of his own tremendous choice,  
And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.

I would not enter on my list of friends,  
(Though grac'd with polish'd manners and fine  
sense,

Yet wanting sensibility,) the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.  
An inadvertent step may crush the snail  
That crawls at ev'ning in the public path ;  
But he that has humanity, forewarn'd,  
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.  
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,  
And charg'd perhaps with venom, that intrudes,  
A visitor unwelcome, into scenes  
Sacred to neatness and repose, th' alcove,  
The chamber, or refectory, may die :

A necessary act incurs no blame.

Not so when, held within their proper bounds,  
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,  
Or take their pastime in the spacious field :

There they are privileg'd ; and he that hunts  
Or harms them there is guilty of a wrong,  
Disturbs the economy of Nature's realm,  
Who, when she form'd, design'd them an abode.  
The sum is this : If man's convenience, health,  
Or safety, interfere, his rights and claims  
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.

Else they are all—the meanest things that are—  
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,

As God was free to form them at the first,  
Who in his sov'reign wisdom made them all.

Ye, therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons  
To love it too. The spring time of our years

Is soon dishonour'd and defil'd in most  
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand  
To check them. But, alas ! none sooner shoots,  
If unrestrain'd, into luxuriant growth,  
Than cruelty, most dev'lish of them all.

Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule

And righteous limitation of its act,

By which Heav'n moves in pard'ning guilty  
man ;

And he that shows none, being ripe in years,  
And conscious of the outrage he commits,  
Shall seek it, and not find it, in his turn.

Distinguish'd much by reason, and still more  
By our capacity of grace divine,  
From creatures, that exist but for our sake,

Which having serv'd us, perish, we are held  
Accountable ; and God some future day  
Will reckon with us roundly for th' abuse  
Of what he deems no mean nor trivial trust.  
Superior as we are, they yet depend  
Not more on human help than we on theirs.  
Their strength, or speed, or vigilance, were  
giv'n

In aid of our defects. In some are found  
Such teachable and apprehensive parts,  
That man's attainments in his own concerns,  
Match'd with th' expertness of the brutes in  
theirs,

Are oft-times vanquish'd and thrown far behind.

Some show that nice sagacity of smell,  
And read with such discernment, in the port  
And figure of the man, his secret aim,  
That oft we owe our safety to a skill  
We could not teach, and must despair to learn.  
But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop  
To quadruped instructors many a good  
And useful quality, and virtue too,  
Rarely exemplified among ourselves.

Attachment never to be wean'd, or chang'd  
By any change of fortune : proof alike  
Against unkindness, absence and neglect ;  
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat  
Can move or warp ; and gratitude for small  
And trivial favours, lasting as the life,  
And glist'ning even the dying eye.

Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms  
Wins public honour ; and ten thousand sit

Patiently present at a sacred song,  
Commemoration mad ; content to hear  
(O wonderful effect of music's power !)  
Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake !  
But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve—  
(For, was it less, what heathen would have  
dar'd

To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,  
And hang it up in honour of a man ?)  
Much less might serve, when all that we design  
Is but to gratify an itching ear,  
And give the day to a musician's praise.  
Remember Handel ! Who, that was not born  
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,  
Or can, the more than Homer of his age ?  
Yes—we remember him ; and while we praise  
A talent so divine, remember too  
That his most holy book from whom it came,  
Was never meant, was never us'd before,  
To buckram out the mem'ry of a man.  
But hush !—the Muse perhaps is too severe  
And with a gravity beyond the size  
And measure of th' offence, rebukes a deed  
Less impious than absurd, and owing more  
To want of judgment than to wrong design.  
So in the chapel of old Ely House,  
When wand'ring Charles, who meant to be the  
third,  
Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,  
The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,  
And eke did roar right merrily, two staves,  
Sung to the praise and glory of King George !

—Man praises man : and Garrick's mem'ry next,  
When time hath somewhat mellow'd it, and  
made

The idol of our worship while he liv'd  
The God of our idolatry once more,  
Shall have its altar ; and the world shall go  
In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.  
The theatre too small, shall suffocate  
Its squeez'd contents, and more than it admits  
Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return  
Ungratified ; for there some noble lord  
Shall stuff his shoulders with King Richard's  
bunch,

Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,  
And strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp, and  
stare,

To show the world how Garrick did not act.  
For Garrick was a worshipper himself ;  
He drew the liturgy, and fram'd the rites  
And solemn ceremonial of the day,  
And call'd the world to worship on the banks  
Of Avon, fam'd in song. Ah, pleasant proof  
That piety has still in human hearts  
Some place, a spark or two not yet extinct.  
The mulberry tree was hung with blooming  
wreaths ;

The mulberry tree stood centre of the dance ;  
The mulberry tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs ;  
And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry tree  
Supplied such relics as devotion holds  
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.  
So 'twas a hallow'd time : decorum reign'd,

And mirth without offence. No few return'd,  
Doubtless, much edified, and all refresh'd.

—Man praises man. The rabble all alive  
From tippling benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,  
Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,  
A pompous and slow-moving pageant, comes.  
Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,  
To gaze in 's eyes, and bless him. Maidens  
wave

Their kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy:  
While others, not so satisfied, unhorse  
The gilded equipage, and turning loose  
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.  
Why? what has charm'd them? Hath he saved  
the state?

No. Doth he purpose its salvation? No.  
Enchanting novelty, that moon at full,  
That finds out ev'ry crevice of the head  
That is not sound, and perfect, hath in theirs  
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,  
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.  
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,  
And dedicate a tribute, in its use  
And just direction sacred, to a thing  
Doom'd to the dust, or lodg'd already there.  
Encomium in old time was poet's work;  
But poets, having lavishly long since  
Exhausted all materials of the art,  
The task now falls into the public hand;  
And I contented with an humbler theme,  
Have pour'd my stream of panegyric down  
The vale of Nature, where it creeps and winds

Among her lovely works with a secure  
And unambitious course, reflecting clear,  
If not the virtues, yet the worth of brutes.  
And I am recompensed, and deem the toils  
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine  
May stand between an animal and wo,  
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.

The groans of Nature in this nether world,  
Which heav'n has heard for ages, have an end.  
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,  
Whose fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,  
The time of rest, the promis'd sabbath, comes  
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh  
Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course  
Over a sinful world ; and what remains  
Of this tempestuous state of human things  
Is merely as the working of a sea  
Before a calm that rocks itself to rest ;  
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds  
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,  
When sin hath mov'd him, and his wrath is hot,  
Shall visit earth in mercy ; shall descend  
Propitious in his chariot pav'd with love ;  
And what his storms have blasted and defac'd  
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

Sweet is the harp of prophecy ; too sweet  
Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch ;  
Nor can the wonders it records be sung  
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.  
But when a poet, or when one like me,  
Happy to rove among poetic flow'rs,  
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last

On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,  
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels  
To give it praise proportioned to its worth,  
That not t' attempt it, arduous as he deems  
The labour, were a task more arduous still.

O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,  
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss ! which who can see,  
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel  
His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy ?  
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,  
And clothe all climes with beauty ; the reproach  
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field  
Laughs with abundance ; and the land, once  
lean,

Or fertile only in its own disgrace,  
Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd.  
The various seasons woven into one,  
And that one season an eternal spring,  
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,  
For there is none to covet, all are full.  
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,  
Graze with the fearless flocks : all bask at noon  
Together, or all gambol in the shade  
Of the same grove, and drink one common  
stream ;

Antipathies are none. No foe to man  
Lurks in the serpent now ; the mother sees,  
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand  
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,  
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive  
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.  
All creatures worship man, and all mankin

One Lord, one Father. Error has no place ;  
That creeping pestilence is driv'n away ;  
The breath of Heav'n has chas'd it. In the heart  
No passion touches a discordant string,  
But all is harmony and love. Disease  
Is not : the pure and uncontaminate blood  
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.  
One song employs all nations ; and all cry,  
“ Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us ! ”  
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks  
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops  
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,  
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.  
Behold the measure of the promise fill'd ;  
See Salem built, the labour of a God !  
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;  
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth  
Flock to that light ; the glory of all lands  
Flows into her ; unbounded is her joy,  
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there  
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there ;\*  
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,  
And Saba's spicy groves pay tribute there.  
Praise is in all her gates ; upon her walls,  
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,  
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there

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\* Nebaioth and Kedar, the sons of Ishmael, and progenitors of the Arabs in the prophetic Scripture here alluded to, may be reasonably considered as representatives of the Gentiles at large.

Kneels with the native of the farthest west ;  
And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,  
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth  
Into all lands. From ev'ry clime they come  
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,  
O Sion ! an assembly such as Earth  
Saw never, such as Heav'n stoops down to see.

Thus heav'nward all things tend. For all  
were once  
Perfect, and all must be at length restor'd.  
So God has greatly purpos'd ; who would else  
In his dishonour'd works himself endure  
Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.  
Haste, then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,  
Ye slow-revolving seasons ! we would see  
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)  
A world, that does not dread and hate his laws,  
And suffer for its crime ; would learn how fair  
The creature is, that God pronounces good ;  
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.  
Here ev'ry drop of honey hides a sting :  
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest  
flow'rs

And e'en the joy, that haply some poor heart  
Derives from Heav'n, pure as the fountain is,  
Is sullied in the stream, taking a taint  
From touch of human lips, at best impure.  
O for a world in principle as chaste  
As this is gross and selfish ! over which  
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,  
That govern all things here, should'ring aside,  
The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her

To seek a refuge from the tongue of Strife  
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men ;  
Where Violence shall never lift the sword,  
Nor Cunning justify the proud man's wrong,  
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears ;  
Where he that fills an office, shall esteem  
Th' occasion it presents for doing good  
More than the perquisite : where Law shall speak  
Seldom, and never but as Wisdom prompts  
And Equity ; not jealous more to guard  
A worthless form than to decide aright :  
Where Fashion shall not sanctify abuse,  
Nor smooth Good-breeding (supplemental grace)  
With lean performance ape the work of Love !

Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,  
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,  
Thou who alone art worthy ! It was thine  
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth ;  
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since ;  
And o'erpaid its value with thy blood.  
Thy saints proclaim thee king ; and in their  
          hearts

Thy title is engraven with a pen  
Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love.  
Thy saints proclaim thee king ; and thy delay  
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they  
          see

The dawn of thy last advent, long desir'd,  
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,  
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.  
The very spirit of the world is tir'd  
Of its own taunting question, ask'd so long,

“Where is the promise of your Lord’s approach?”

The infidel has shot his bolts away,  
Till his exhausted quiver yielding none,  
He gleans the blunted shafts, that have recoil’d,  
And aims them at the shield of Truth again.  
The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,  
That hides divinity from mortal eyes;  
And all the mysteries to faith propos’d,  
Insulted and traduc’d are cast aside,  
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.  
They now are deem’d the faithful and are prais’d,  
Who, constant only in rejecting Thee,  
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr’s zeal,  
And quit their office for their error’s sake.  
Blind and in love with darkness! yet e’en these  
Worthy, compar’d with sycophants, who kneel  
Thy name adoring, and then preach thee man;  
So fares thy church. But how thy church may  
fare  
The world takes little thought. Who will may  
preach,  
And what they will. All pastors are alike  
To wand’ring sheep, resolv’d to follow none.  
Two gods divide them all—Pleasure and Gain;  
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,  
And in their service wage perpetual war  
With Conscience and with Thee. Lust in their  
hearts,  
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth  
To prey upon each other; stubborn, fierce,  
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.

Thy prophets speak of such ; and noting down  
The features of the last degen'rate times,  
Exhibit every lineament of these.

Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,  
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,  
Due to thy last and most effectual work,  
Thy word fulfill'd, the conquest of a world !

He is the happy man, whose life e'en now  
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come ;  
Who, doom'd to an obscure but tranquil state,  
Is pleas'd with it, and, were he free to choose,  
Would make his fate his choice ; whom peace,  
the fruit

Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,  
Prepare for happiness ; bespeak him one  
Content indeed to sojourn while he must  
Below the skies, but having there his home.  
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search  
Of objects more illustrious in her view ;  
And occupied as earnestly as she,  
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the World.  
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not ;  
He seeks not hers, for he has prov'd them vain.  
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds  
Pursuing gilded flies ; and such he deems  
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.  
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,  
Whose pow'r is such, that whom she lifts from  
earth

She makes familiar with a Heav'n unseen,  
And shows him glories yet to be reveal'd.  
Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,

And censur'd oft as useless. Stillest streams  
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird  
That flutters least is longest on the wing.  
Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has rais'd,  
Or what achievements of immortal fame  
He purposes, and he shall answer—None.  
His warfare is within. There, unfatigu'd,  
His fervent spirit labours. There he fights  
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,  
And never-with'ring wreaths, compar'd with  
which,

The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.  
Perhaps the self-approving, haughty world,  
That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks  
Scarce deigns to notice him, or if she see,  
Deems him a cypher in the works of God,  
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,  
Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes  
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring  
And plenteous harvest, to the pray'r he makes,  
When, Isaac like, the solitary saint  
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,  
And think on her who thinks not for herself.  
Forgive him, then, thou bustler in concerns  
Of little worth, an idler in the best,  
If, author of no mischief and some good,  
He seeks his proper happiness by means  
That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.  
Nor, though he tread the secret path of life,  
Engage no notice, and enjoy much ease,  
Account him an encumbrance on the state,  
Receiving benefits, and rend'ring none.

His sphere, though humble, if that humble  
sphere

Shines with his fair example ; and though small  
His influence, if that influence all be spent  
In soothing sorrow, and in quenching strife,  
In aiding helpless indigence in works  
From which at least a grateful few derive  
Some taste of comfort in a world of wo ;  
Then let the supercilious great confess  
He serves his country, recompenses well  
The state beneath the shadow of whose vine  
He sits secure, and in the scale of life  
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted, place.  
The man, whose virtues are more felt than  
seen,

Must drop indeed the hope of public praise :  
But he may boast, what few that win it can,  
That if his country stand not by his skill,  
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.  
Polite Refinement offers him in vain  
Her golden tube, through which a sensual  
World

Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,  
The neat conveyance, hiding all the offence.  
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode,  
Because that World adopts it. If it bear  
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,  
And be not costly more than of true worth  
He puts it on, and for decorum sake  
Can wear it e'en as gracefully as she.  
She judges of refinement by the eye ;  
He, by the test of conscience, and a heart

Not soon deceiv'd; aware, that what is base  
No polish can make sterling; and that vice,  
Though well perfum'd and elegantly dress'd,  
Like an unburied carcass trick'd with flow'rs,  
Is but a garnish'd nuisance, fitter far  
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.  
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,  
More golden than that age of fabled gold  
Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care  
Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approv'd  
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.  
So glide my life away! and so at last  
My share of duties decently fulfill'd,  
May some disease, not tardy to perform  
Its destin'd office, yet with gentle stroke,  
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,  
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.  
It shall not grieve me then, that once, when  
    call'd  
To dress a Sofa with the flow'rs of verse,  
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,  
With that light Task; but soon, to please her  
    more,  
Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,  
Let fall th' unfinish'd wreath, and rov'd for fruit;  
Rov'd far, and gather'd much; some harsh, 'tis  
    true,  
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,  
But wholesome, well digested; grateful some  
To palates that can taste immortal truth;  
Insipid else, and sure to be despised.  
But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.

In vain the poet sings, and the World hears,  
If he regard not, though divine the theme.  
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime  
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,  
To charm His ear whose eye is on the heart,  
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,  
Whose approbation—prosper even mine.

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